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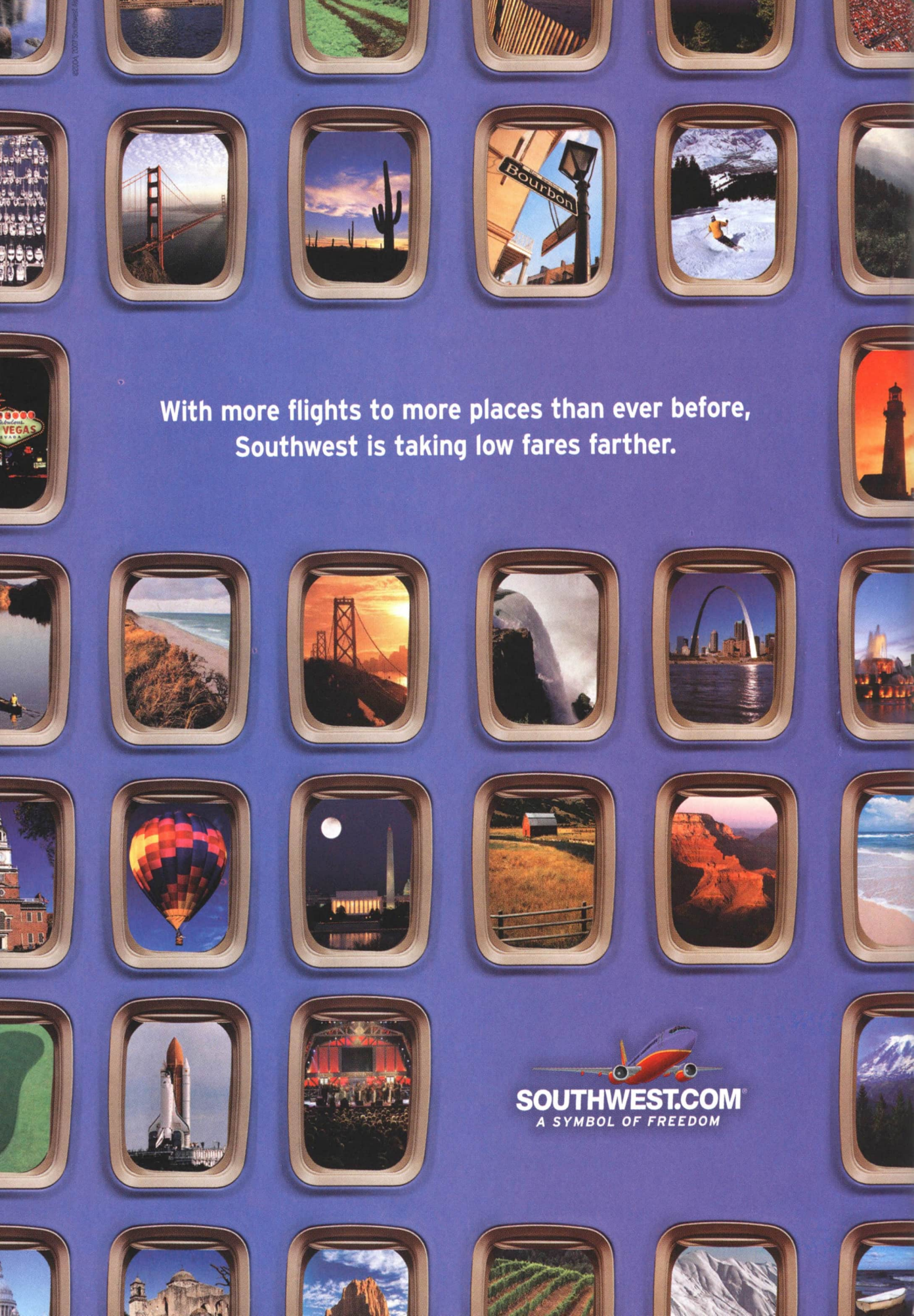
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Volume 87, No. 9 August 2008

The RING

Calzaghe's Unique Situation

For the first time since THE RING launched its new Championship Policy in 2002, one fighter holds two RING belts—Joe Calzaghe.

The Welshman was the super middleweight champion going into his fight with light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins, and the fact that Calzaghe won and is now the light heavyweight champion does not automatically mean he is no longer champion at 168 pounds.

This could very well be a fleeting situation. Calzaghe may decide to stay at 175 pounds, in which case the super middleweight title would become vacant. But, hypothetically, he could defend the light heavyweight title against, say, Roy Jones, and then go back down to super middle and defend that belt against, perhaps, Kelly Pavlik. And if that's the course of action Calzaghe wishes to take, more power to him. He'll be following in the footsteps of one of boxing's true immortals.

In 1939, reigning featherweight champ Henry Armstrong won both the lightweight and welterweight championships, making him, for a brief span, the only man to simultaneously hold three world championships. This unique feat has never been repeated, but not because there has never been another fighter capable of matching Armstrong's amazing exploits. When welterweight champion Emile Griffith (weighing 150½ pounds) beat Dick Tiger for the middleweight title in 1996, he wanted to keep—and defend—both titles. But the New York State Athletic Commission said no. When Griffith sued in an attempt to keep both championships, he lost the case. And as far as that third title is concerned, don't forget that Emile had won the European Boxing Union's junior middleweight title in '62 and made one successful defense before concentrating on the more lucrative welterweight title, so holding a trio of world titles was clearly within his capabilities. It was outside-of-the-ring meddling that stopped him, not an opponent.

None of this is to suggest that Calzaghe should (or could) emulate Armstrong or Griffith. The point is that he should be afforded the opportunity to retain and defend both titles if that is what he wants to do. No commission or alphabet organization has any say whatsoever about RING championships, and as the RING belt was the only one on the line in Calzaghe-Hopkins, if Calzaghe wants to defend at both weights, the only thing he would have to worry about is the guy in the other corner.

Some people are concerned that because THE RING has a strict no-strip policy, a champion could sit on a title, effectively putting it on ice. And while that is possible, RING champions have always done the right thing when that sort of situation threatened: Manny Pacquiao, Winky Wright, and Paulie Ayala all voluntarily relinquished RING championships when they decided to no longer compete in the division in which they held belts. And I have no doubt that Calzaghe, an honorable man, would do likewise if and when the time comes.

To paraphrase Thomas Paine, THE RING believes that "he who governs least governs best." Just a few basic rules concerning championships are all boxing needs; the rest is an elaborate ruse to control, manipulate, and profit from the sweat and blood of others.

Unlike the Alphabet Boys, THE RING thinks that fighters should be allowed to control their own destinies. If that means trying to be world champion in two divisions at the same time, they should be free to give it a shot, unfettered by restrictions designed to line the pockets of those who never give or receive a punch.

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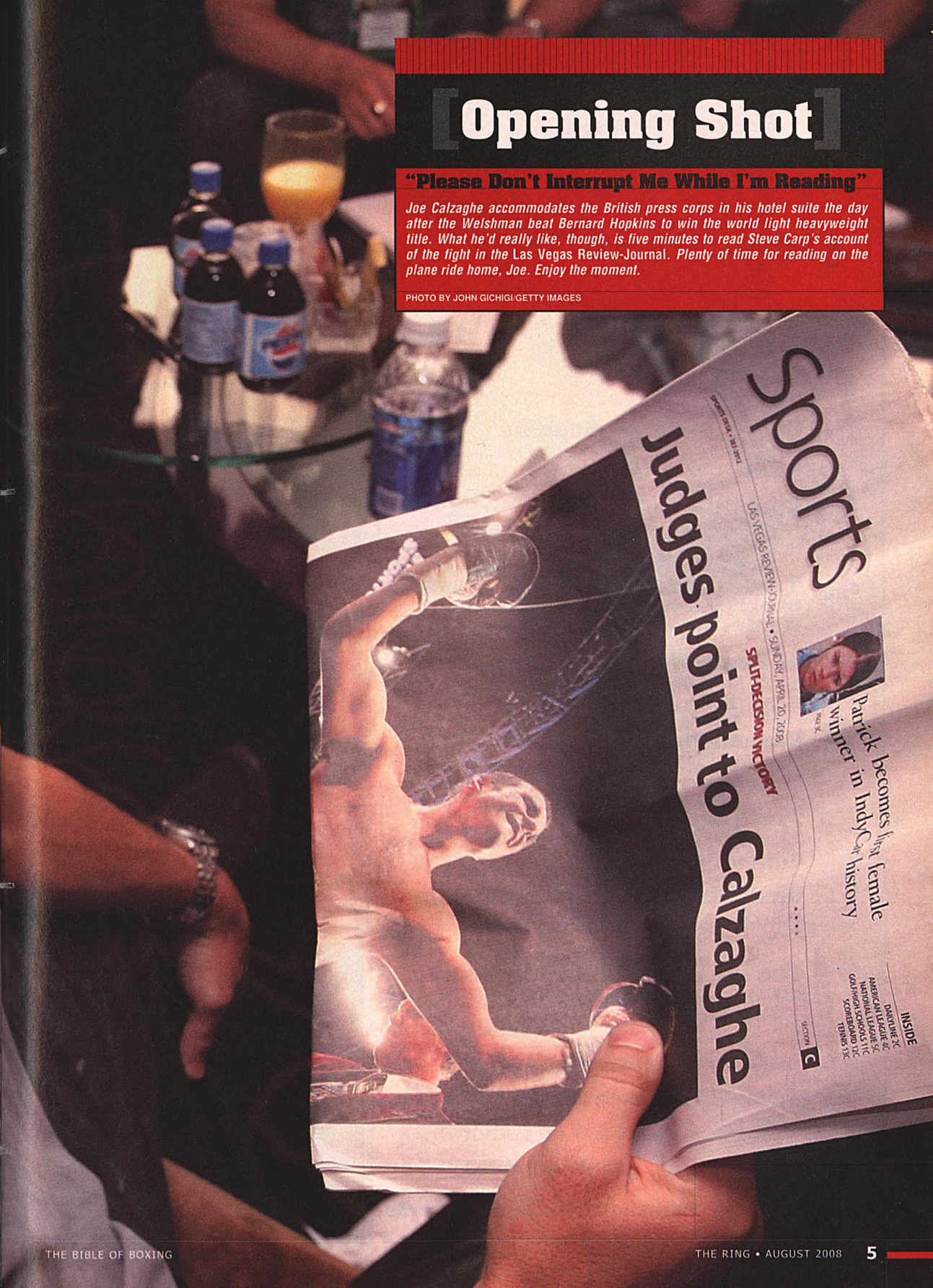
[Opening Shot]

"Please Don't Interrupt Me While I'm Reading"

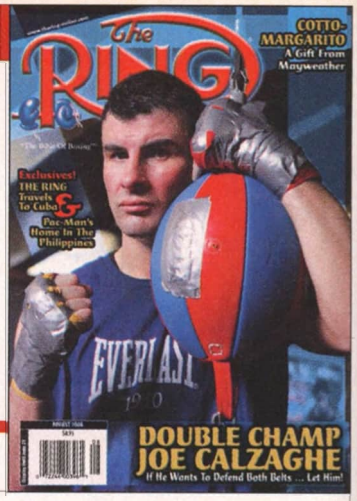
Joe Calzaghe accommodates the British press corps in his hotel suite the day after the Welshman beat Bernard Hopkins to win the world light heavyweight title. What he'd really like, though, is five minutes to read Steve Carp's account of the fight in the Las Vegas Review-Journal. *Plenty of time for reading on the plane ride home, Joe. Enjoy the moment.*

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES



Contents

The RING®



August 2008

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Features

26 Calzaghe Edges Hopkins
An Ugly Changing Of the Guard
By Nigel Collins

34 Cotto vs. Margarito
A Gift To Boxing From "Money" Mayweather
By Eric Raskin

42 Tarver-Woods ... Dawson-Johnson
The Light Heavyweight Card That Solved Nothing
By William Dettloff

48 At Home With Manny Pacquiao
Get To Know The Pac-Man You Never Knew Before
By Ted Lerner

56 Casamayor vs. Campbell
It Makes Too Much Sense To Happen
By Don Stradley

64 The Ring Visits Cuba ...
Where Boxing History Begins A Half-Century Ago
By Robert Cassidy

72 Kevin Rooney Reclaims His Life
Seeing Clearly, Though A Little Sideways
By Michael Rivest

79 The Best Eras In Boxing History
A Division-By-Division Analysis
By Gavin Evans

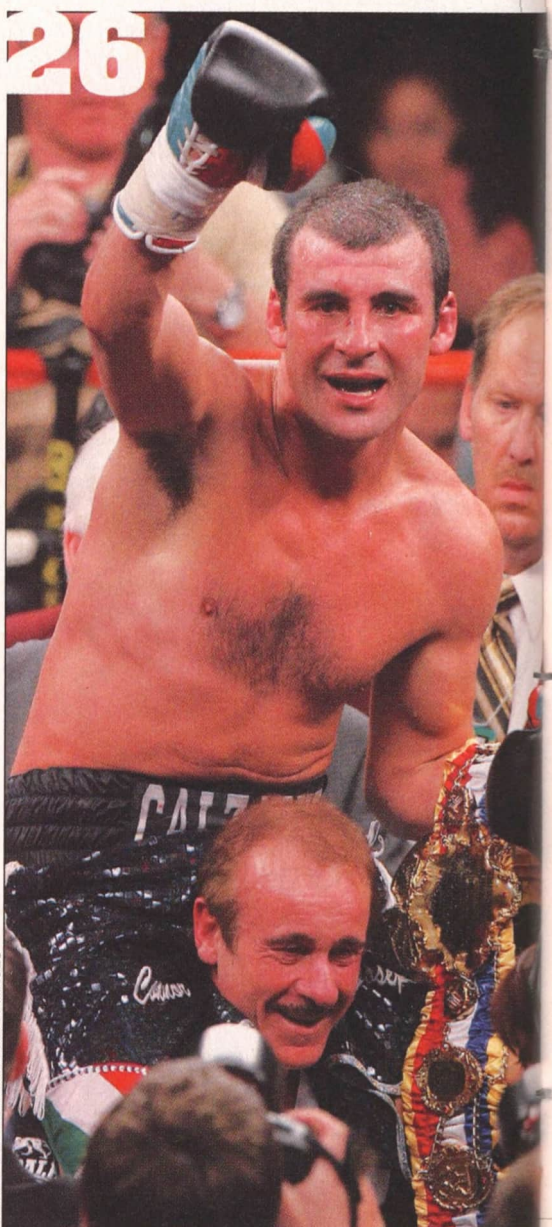
Ringside Reports

104 Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports

Ratings

13 Ratings Analysis

14 The Ring's International Ratings & Records



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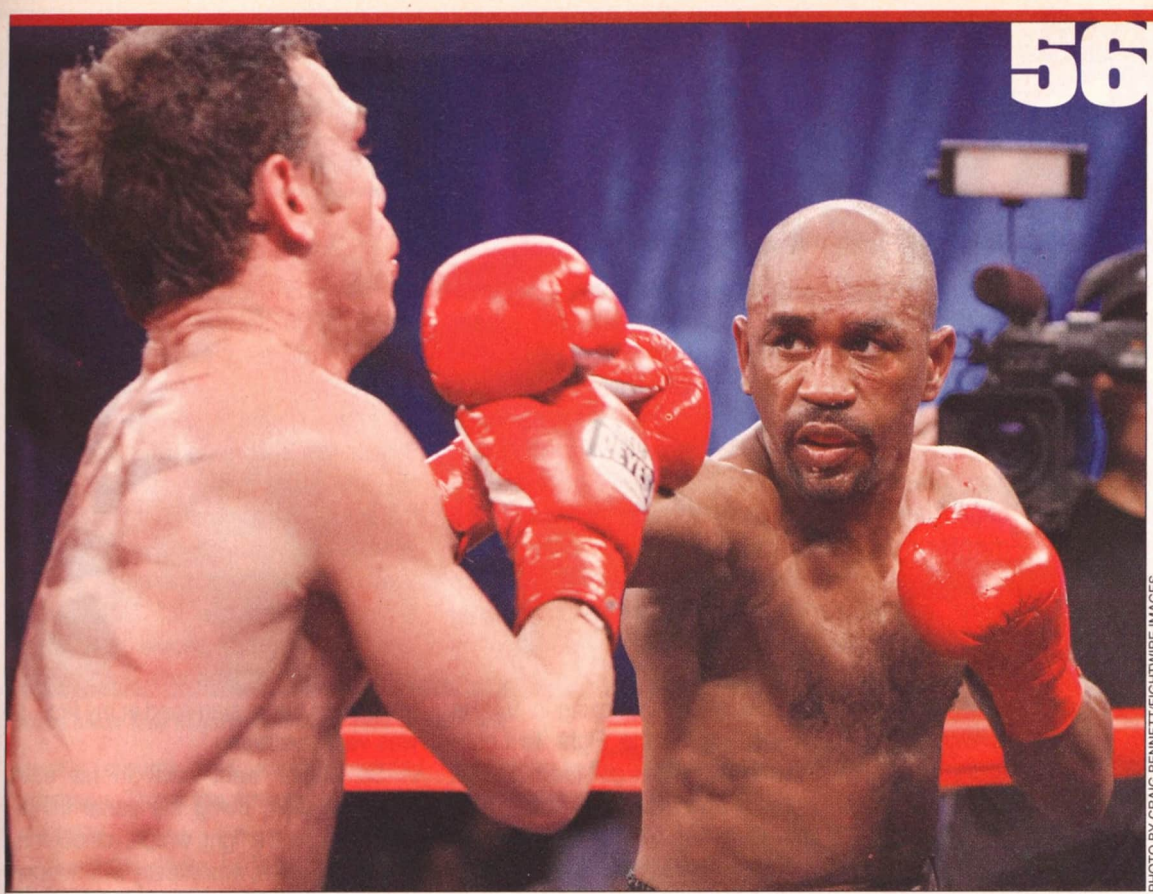

56

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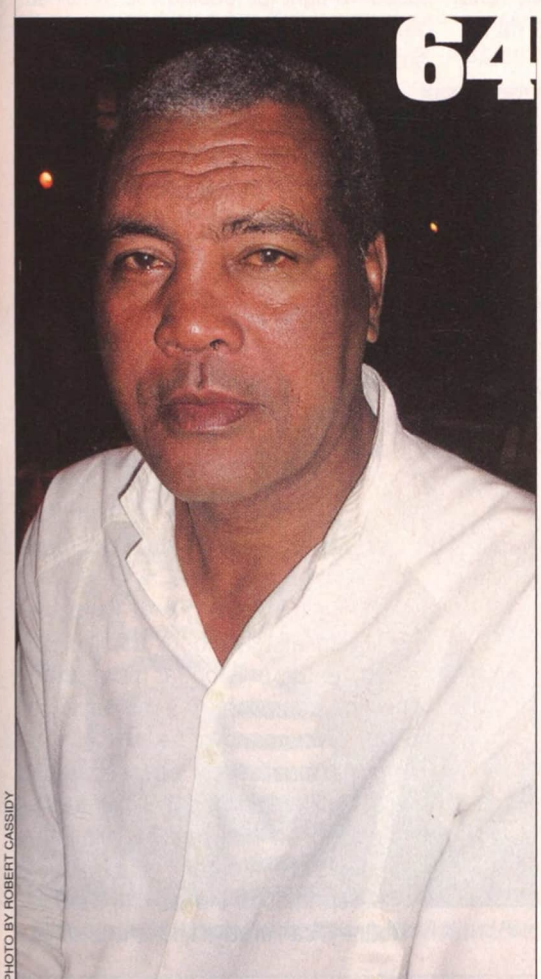


64

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Departments

3 **Ringside** *by Nigel Collins*

8 **Round One**

16 **Ryan Out Loud** *by Jeff Ryan*

18 **Digging Deep** *by Ivan Goldman*

22 **Camera Clicks**

24 **New Faces: Mike Jones**
by Joseph Santoliquito

100 **Hall Of Fame Profile: Joey Giardello**

102 **Worldwide Fight Results**

118 **Showdown:** Manny Pacquiao-David Diaz

122 **Flashback:** May 1940

125 **Perfect Execution** *by Bernard Hopkins*

130 **Fight Doctor** *by Margaret Goodman, MD*

132 **Hitting On The Break** *by Jim Bagg*

136 **Come Out Writing**

138 **Looking Ahead** *by Eric Raskin*

"Rockin' Rodney's" New Fight

Rodney Moore wears a look of contentment these days and enjoys the peace of mind that many former fighters, especially successful ones, sometimes struggle to find after their boxing careers have ended.

The source of his satisfaction comes from doing something he began during his boxing career—mentoring young children. The difference is that Moore isn't on the periphery; he's created and actively runs the Fight To Learn program, located at the Belfield Recreation Center in North Philadelphia, in partnership with the Philadelphia Recreation Department.

Moore knows what lurks on the mean streets of North Philly. He was raised there, learned how to box there, and for the last 10 years of his career would frequently return there to speak with grade school and high school children about making it out of there.

Moore had a 14-year pro career (1983-'97), spent mostly at junior welterweight and welterweight, compiling a 38-10-2 (20) mark, with three failed attempts to win a world title. But Moore was perhaps best known as "The King Of The Blue Horizon." He fought 16 times at the fabled North Philly venue, compiling a 14-1-1 record, with his lone Blue Horizon loss coming against Ramon Zavale, a split-decision in June 1992.

Moore retired from boxing in '97. He began working on the Fight To Learn program in 2001 and got the nonprofit program up and running in 2002. With 32 kids from ages 5-12, the program offers homework support, tutoring, computer training, life-skill training, and enrichment classes that feature dance and drama.

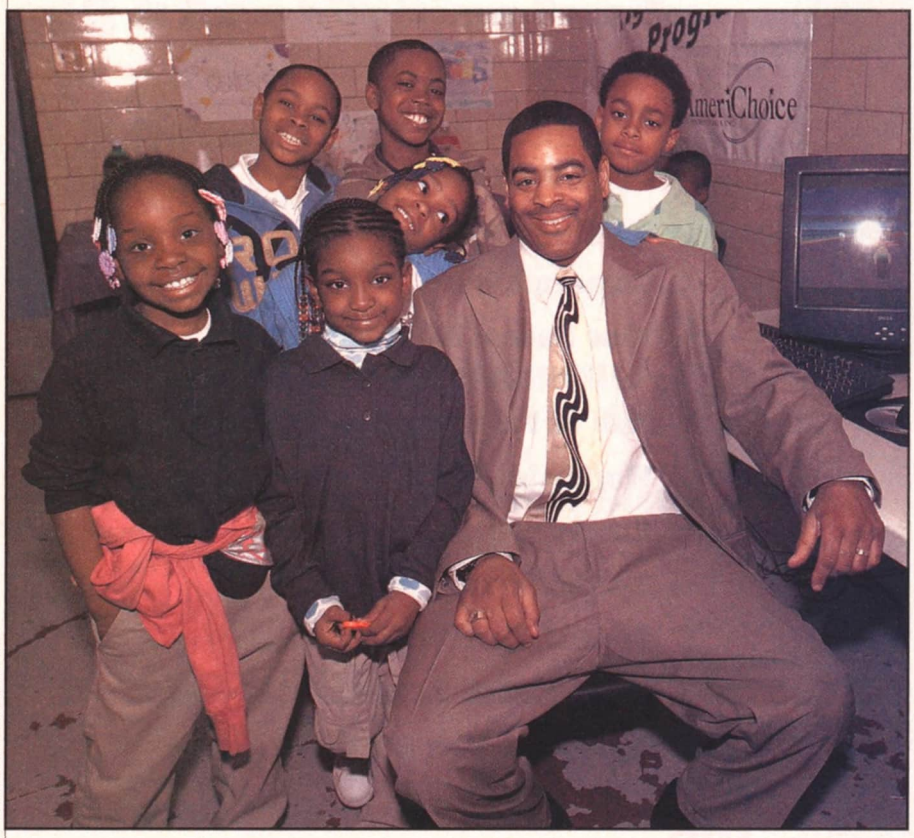


PHOTO BY WEBSTER RIDDICK

Moore with some of the children enrolled in the Fight To Learn program

The costs to support the program are around $200,000 per year, and Moore pounded on many doors to make this all a reality.

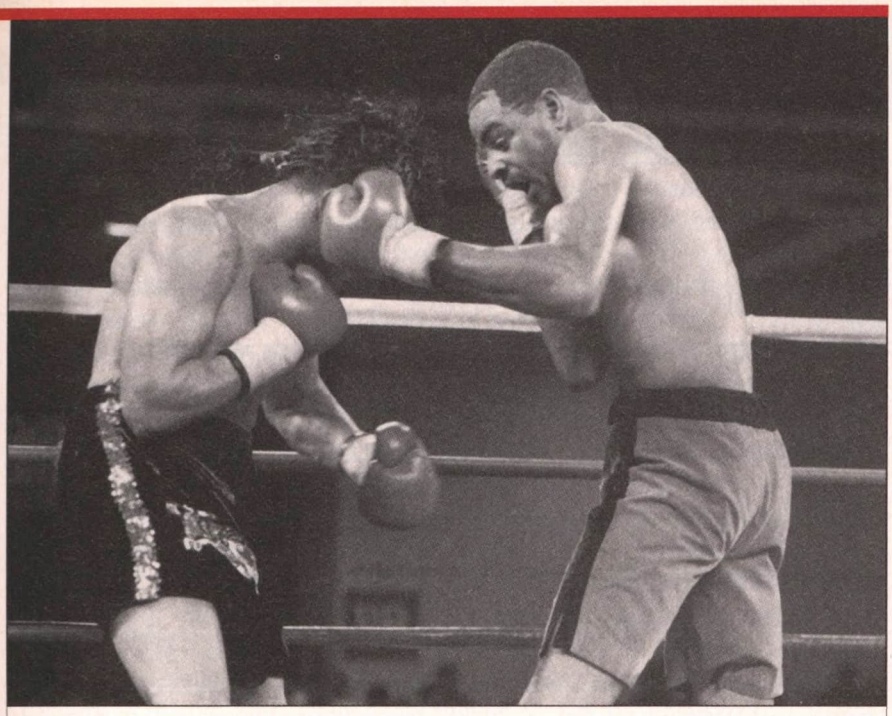
"I envisioned this program one day saving children and moving them forward, which is the only reason I put the time and effort into it. If I knew then what I know now about what it would take to get it started, I don't know if I would have done it," Moore said, laughing. "A lot of people didn't want to walk hand-in-hand with me at first. I got a lot of doors slammed in my face. It was very frustrating."

So Moore went back to his boxing foundation, doing the same things required to win a fight, which, although in a different arena, was exactly what Moore faced—a fight for funding. He remained steadfast, made the right connections, and gained the trust and confidence of donors. What drove him the hardest was his passion for children.

"There were a lot of obstacles. People hear stories every day about great ideas and they think that they're scams," Moore said. "That's what I had to deal with. I had to go back to a lot of people who originally slammed doors in my face. I knew it was part of the political game. But I always had a passion for kids. I role-modeled and mentored kids during my career. Giving back to children and saying a few words to them, telling them that there are people out there who care means everything."

It's still a struggle to keep the program afloat, Moore admits. But Fight To Learn is on far more stable ground than when it sprouted in 2002. Moore says he still has to prove himself every day, especially with the state and the IRS, constantly checking on him, making sure his finances are in order.

Even through the tedium, "Rockin' Rodney" can always find time to smile,



Moore hooks Tony Baltazar en route to 1992 decision win

usually around 2:45 every weekday afternoon. That's the time to pick up the children.

"I almost threw in the towel a few times; people said they were going to help me and they didn't. There were a lot of false promises, whether it's for kids or not. But now I can't be stopped," Moore said. "It's the same attitude I had in the ring. This is a blessing that was given to me. It's my calling now. I'm doing what I'm supposed to do, hopefully to pass this along to my children to run, and my grandchildren."

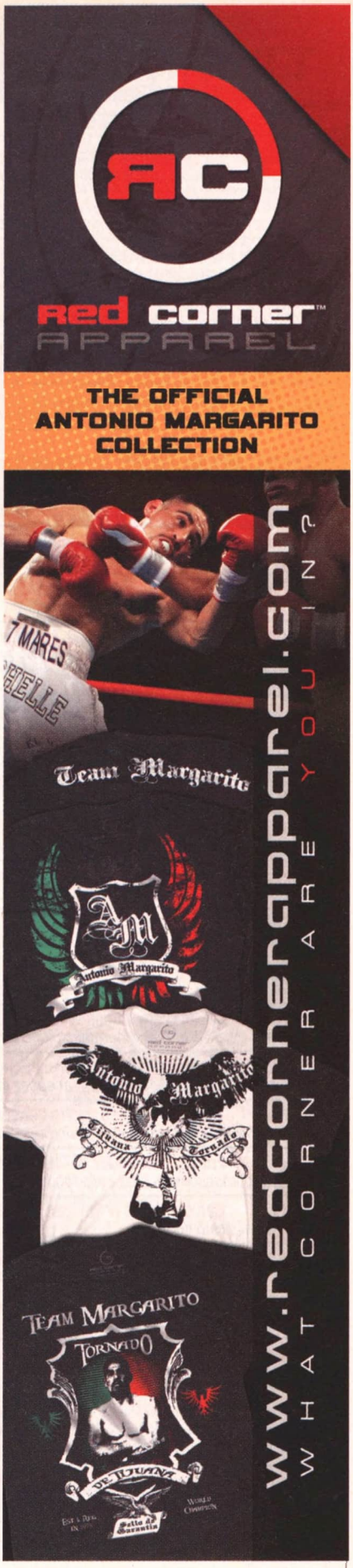
A positive legacy, Moore hopes, that will last beyond any ring memories.

(Anyone interested in learning more about the Fight To Learn program or interested in donating can contact Rodney Moore at 215-514-8748 or visit the program's website at **www.fighttolearn.com.**)

—Joseph Santoliquito

PHOTO BY WEBSTER RIDDICK

Moore is joined by Program Director Ashley Raiford (left) and Pennsylvania State Senator LeAnna Washington



TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
3/28/08	Cornelius Lock KO 4 Juan Garcia *Favored Garcia lacks punch to un-lock veteran foe*	Telef	jl	C-	C+	C+
3/28/08	Mike Jones W 8 Germaine Sanders *First distance fight for powerpunching prospect*	ESPN2	w	C	C	C
3/28/08	Cornelius Bundrage W 10 Kassim Ouma *Body beautiful Bundrage now creating body of work*	ESPN2	jm	B-	B	C+
4/03/08	Joshua Clottey KO 5 Jose Luis Cruz *Clottey continues to make a case for a title shot*	Versus	w	B	C+	C+
4/03/08	Yuri Foreman W 10 Saul Roman *Foreman first graduate of the Sven Ottke School of Boxing*	Versus	jm	B-	C+	C
4/04/08	Jesus Chavez W 10 Daniel Jimenez *Age is slowing Chavez more than that huge knee brace*	Telef	l	B	C+	C
4/04/08	Jhonny Gonzalez KO 3 Edel Ruiz *Gonzalez has whips hanging form his shoulders, not arms*	Telef	b	B	C	C+
4/04/08	Aaron Williams KO 2 Andre Purlette *This Williams kid boxes like a young James Toney*	ESPN2	c	C+	C+	B-
4/04/08	Jason Estrada W 10 Lance Whitaker *Whitaker remains a gentle giant inside the ring*	ESPN2	h	C	C+	D
4/09/08	Rayonta Whitfield W 12 Manuel Vargas *Late fate by Whitfield keeps fight interesting*	ESPN2	fl	B-	B-	C+
4/11/08	Carlos De Leon Jr. KO 7 James McGirt Jr. *Both fathers had to be proud of the last two rounds*	Show	sm	C	C	C+
4/11/08	Edgar Santana W 10 Josesito Lopez *Santana overcomes knockdown to win fight in late rounds*	Show	jw	C+	B-	B-
4/11/08	Jesus Soto Karass W 10 Chris Smith *Third round is candidate for Round of the Year*	Telef	w	C+	C+	B+
4/11/08	Henry Bruseles W 10 Ben Tackie *Tackie has gone the distance in every loss*	Telef	jw	C+	C+	C+
4/12/08	Antonio Tarver W 12 Clinton Woods *If only Tarver's actions could still match his words*	Show	lh	A-	A-	C+
4/12/08	Chad Dawson W 12 Glen Johnson *Dawson wins fight; Johnson scores kayo in postfight interview*	Show	lh	A	A-	A
4/12/08	Antonio Margarito KO 6 Kermit Cintron *Reversing kayo loss is one of the hardest feats in sports*	HBO	w	A	A	B
4/12/08	Miguel Cotto KO 5 Alfonso Gomez *Unfortunately for Gomez, only his chin is world class*	HBO	w	A-	C	C+
4/16/08	Chazz Witherspoon W 10 Domonic Jenkins *No pizazz from Chazz, another uninspiring American heavy*	ESPN2	h	C+	C+	C
4/16/08	Peter Quillin W 10 Antwun Echols *"Kid Chocolate" is a sweet addition at super middleweight*	ESPN2	sm	C+	C+	C+
4/18/08	Tomas Villa W 10 Adolfo Landeros *Exciting Villa has not lost since moving up to 10-rounders*	Telef	f	C+	C+	B-
4/18/08	Freddy Hernandez W 12 Norberto Bravo *Late-round knockdowns seal hard-fought win*	Telef	w	C+	C+	B-
4/18/08	Carson Jones W 10 Jose Gonzalez *Solid no-frills club fight*	ESPN2	jm	C-	C	C
4/18/08	Kevin Johnson W 10 Terry Smith *One of the few heavy's who can win while backing up*	ESPN2	h	C+	C+	C
4/19/08	Tomasz Adamek KO 8 O'Neil Bell *Frustrated Bell pulls a "No Mas" after seven*	ESPN Classic	c	A-	A-	B-
4/19/08	**Joe Calzaghe W 12 Bernard Hopkins** ***Calzaghe edges faded legend***	**HBO**	**lh**	**A+**	**A**	**C+**

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

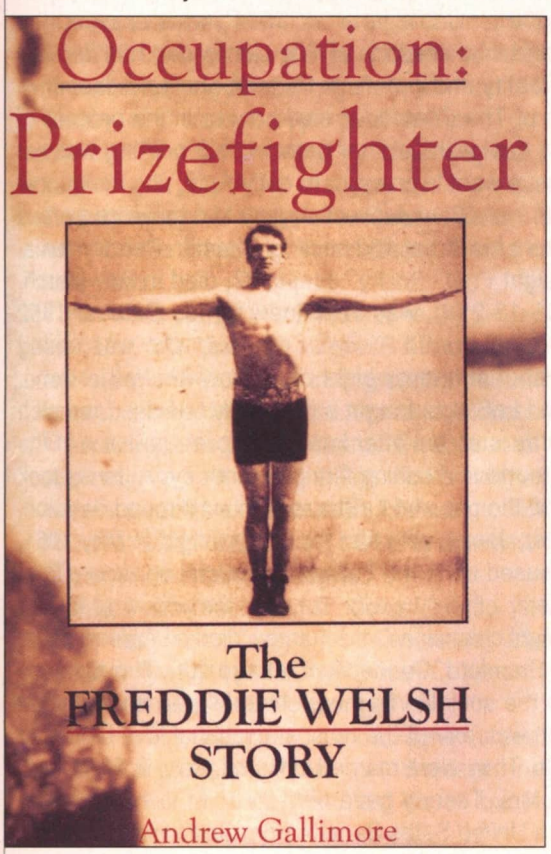
Boxing Bookshelf

Freddie Welsh was a vegetarian who enjoyed an occasional steak, a teetotaler who celebrated his ascension to the lightweight throne by going on a weeklong bender, and even after he was a famous boxer, the man called "The Welsh Wizard" mysteriously insisted that his wife of many years masquerade as his charlady and sister. These and the many other fascinating points on his oscillating personal compass are covered with very commendable and enjoyable thoroughness by Andrew Gallimore in Occupation: *Prizefighter—The Freddie Welsh* Story (Seren Press, £14.99, hardcover, 352 pages).

In fact, biographies of worthy champions of yore as densely packed with detail as this one are as rare as unified titles are today. And thanks to Gallimore's straightforward, descriptive prose, it doesn't read like a PhD dissertation. Under Gallimore's microscope, Welsh—an articulate man and an exceptional boxer who beat Willie Ritchie for the title and held it for three years—comes across as an admirable if puzzling character who broadened interest in boxing by "discussing art and literature and espousing the view that meat-eating was harmful, and explaining how he trained for all his contests on a diet of nuts and vegetables," even when he didn't always practice what he preached. His own best press agent, the vacationing Welsh once even sent out word that he had been kidnapped by Mexican revolutionaries.

Welsh elongated his championship reign by appearing often in American no-decision bouts he could only lose by kayo or disqualification. He didn't mind going into the other fighter's hometown, and wasn't fazed by the cries of "Kill the Englishman!" heard with increasing frequency as he tended to fight just hard enough to go the distance.

Benny Leonard knocked out Welsh in their 1917 championship fight, and after that not even Welsh's remarkable intellect and enterprise could pull him out of a downward spiral. "Freddie dedicated his life to the pursuit of his dream and when it was all over and the grail lost, he found himself in a frightening and unfamiliar world," writes Gallimore. "He had lived too long with a single dream; without it, the meticulous creation that was Freddie Welsh disintegrated."



It's a highly recommended book about a forgotten great, filled with stories about such Welsh contemporaries as Battling Nelson, Ad Wolgast, and Packey McFarland. But as a proud Wisconsinite, it is incumbent upon me to protest Gallimore's dismissal of Frankie Conley as a "palooka lightweight." Conley, from Kenosha, was no Freddie Welsh, but he was briefly recognized as bantamweight champion in the early-20th century.

—Pete Ehrmann

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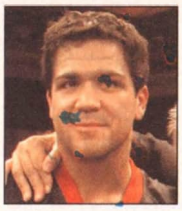
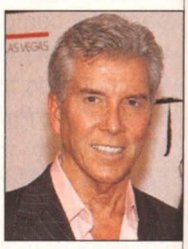
Outside the Ropes

Bernard Hopkins and the **Make-a-Wish Foundation** teamed up to fulfill the dream of 18-year-old **Shaun Negler,** who is suffering from Ewing's sarcoma, a type of bone cancer found in children and young adults. Negler, an amateur boxer from the Parkwood section of Northeast Philadelphia, was diagnosed in 2006 after twisting his ankle training for a bout. Shortly thereafter, Negler had his left leg amputated, and when Hopkins learned of his plight, he visited the teenager in the hospital and presented him with a special-edition "Executioner" watch. Unfortunately, Negler's cancer spread to his brain, and although most of the cancer is currently in remission, there is still a spot on his ribs and he continues to undergo chemotherapy. Negler's dream of seeing Hopkins fight in person was fulfilled when he and his family traveled to Las Vegas for Hopkins' match with **Joe Calzaghe** in April. Two days before the fight, Negler had a private audience with Hopkins in the fighter's suite at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino ... Heavyweight **Joe Mesi**, 34, has announced that he will run for a seat in the New York State Senate. Mesi, a Democrat, will vie for the seat vacated by Republican **Mary Lou Rath**, who will retire at the end of the year. "I never, ever plan on having a teary-eyed press conference announcing my retirement," said Mesi, whose boxing career has sputtered since he suffered a brain bleed in a 2004 bout against Vassiliy Jirov. "As far as boxing, I'll never say never, but I'm full-time into this campaign right now. If I'm going to run, I'm going to be the hardest-working candidate, and if elected, the hardest-working senator" ... Welterweight champion **Floyd Mayweather** donated $140,000 to the West Michigan Sports Commission to pay the operating budget for the National Golden Gloves Tournament of Champions, which took place in his hometown of Grand Rapids from May 5 through May 10.



Mesi: Political aspirations

"This is an opportunity to recognize the organization that got my career started," said Mayweather. "If there is anything worth putting my money toward it is the Michigan Golden Gloves, who have helped kids excel in the sport of boxing for years" ... The **Nevada State Athletic Commission** voted 4-0 to amend its rule for glove size, which had, for the past several years, mandated that boxers who weighed more than 135 pounds wear 10-ounce gloves. "We found no evidence that an 8-ounce glove would be significantly less safe than a 10-ounce glove in these weight classes," said **Keith Kizer**, commission executive director. The amendment will allow lightweight and welterweight boxers the option of using 8- or 10-ounce gloves. If the camps can't agree, the default glove size will be 10 ounces ... Referee **Rudy Battle**, who has worked approximately 1,000 pro bouts, including about 100 title fights, has replaced **Humberto Perez** as head of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission ... Reading, Pennsylvania, heavyweight **Travis D. Kauffman**, 22, was acquitted of rape and indecent assault charges ... Two robes worn my former heavyweight champion **Joe Frazier** were sold at Sotheby's Auction in April. The robe "Smokin' Joe" wore for his third fight with **Muhammad Ali**, in 1975, known as the "Thrilla In Manila," sold for $40,000, while the robe he wore to the weigh-in for his 1974 fight with Ali in New York City sold for $20,000 ... Cable network **ESPN**, which carried the second and third seasons of *The Contender*, has decided to drop reality show. **Jeff Wald**, promoter and executive producer of *The Contender*, said he was in the process of making a deal with another network, but nothing was set as this issue went to press ... In early-April, ring announcer **Michael Buffer**, 63, underwent surgery to remove cancerous tumors from his throat and neck ... Chester, Pennsylvania, heavyweight **Fred "Rocky" Jones**, 87, died in late-March. Jones, 15-13-2 (8), was best know for his October 1952 upset of highly rated **Roland LaStraza**, who was tuning up for a shot at heavyweight champion **Rocky Marciano**. Jones and LaStraza fought a nationally televised rematch two months later, but after knocking down LaStraza in the second round and cutting him over both eyes, Jones took his foot off the gas and LaStraza won a 10-round decision. Years later, Jones, who had his last pro fight in May 1961, said he eased up in the LaStraza rematch on orders from his corner ... **Polly Lauder Tunney**, the widow of former heavyweight champion **Gene Tunney**, died on April 12 at her home in Stamford, Connecticut, at age 100. The romance between the socialite/Carnegie heiress and heavyweight champion was one of the most sensational love stories of the 1920s. They were married in Rome, Italy, in 1928, and, in 1934, Mrs. Tunney gave birth to **John V. Tunney**, who became a United Sates Senator from California in 1970.



Buffer: Undergoes surgery

Quotable

"Who's Tony Thompson? What have Thompson and Alexander Povetkin ever done? These people are bums. Fight the main man, that's me. There is no need to hide behind these mandatory bums."

—Cruiserweight champion David Haye, trying to goad IBF heavyweight titleholder Wladimir Klitschko into fighting him

"He has to face the fact that when he gets in a ring, every other kid will want to decapitate him because of who he is."

—Former WBC featherweight titleholder and member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame Barry McGuigan, discussing the amateur career of his 17-year-old son, Shane McGuigan

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended April 28, 2008

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: Tomasz Adamek makes his debut at three at cruiserweight, after stopping O'Neil Bell. Bell drops from three to six, with everyone rated six and below dropping one place each. Adamek's inclusion forces out Johnathon Banks from10.
Light Heavyweights: Joe Calzaghe is the new world champion after dethroning former champ Bernard Hopkins, who drops to one. Antonio Tarver's victory over Clinton Woods (second last issue) enables him to move from three to two. Chad Dawson's controversial decision over fourth-rated Glen Johnson advances him from five to three. Zsolt Erdei (first last issue) drops to five due to dubious opposition, while Paul Briggs (seventh last issue) and Reggie Johnson (ninth last issue) exit. Woods falls to seven, Chris Henry jumps from 10 to nine, and Juergen Braehmer debuts at 10.
Super Middleweights: No changes.
Middleweights: Amin Asikainen (sixth last issue) and Randy Griffin (seventh last issue) each jump up one spot, as Javier Castillejo (fifth last issue) drops down two places after being stopped by fourth-rated Sebastian Sylvester. John Duddy (10th last issue) exits and is replaced by Giovanni Lorenzo.
Junior Middleweights: Verno Phillips (ninth last issue) catapults up to two by decisioning Cory Spinks, who falls from one to four. Vernon Forrest (second last issue) moves to number one. Phillips' victory shifts everyone from four to eight down one slot each.
Welterweights: Kermit Cintron (seventh last issue) plummets to nine after getting stopped again by fifth-rated Antonio Margarito. Joshua Clottey (ninth last issue) jumps to seven.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: Cassius Baloyi (ninth last issue) switches with Mzonke Fana (eighth last issue), thanks to Baloyi's decision victory over Fana.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym (eighth last issue) moves to five, trading places with Somsak Sithchatchawal (fifth last issue), who drops to eight after being stopped by Kratingdaenggym.
Bantamweights: Ricardo Cardoba (sixth last issue) exits to campaign at junior featherweight. This moves everyone from eight through 10 up one place each and makes room for Anselmo Moreno to enter at 10.
Junior Bantamweights: No changes.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: Omar Salado (seventh last issue) trades spots with Nelson Dieppa (sixth last issue), after Dieppa was decisioned by junior flyweight world champ Ivan Calderon.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: Joe Calzaghe surges from five to three, thanks to his split-decision victory over Bernard Hopkins. The change drops Juan Manuel Marquez (third last issue) and Hopkins (fourth last issue) one place each.

The RING
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Light Heavyweight/
   Super Middleweight
4. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
5. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Kelly Pavlik**
   Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

[The Ring Ratings]

For Period Ended April 28, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

PHOTO BY RONNY HARTMAN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Middleweight Amin Asikainen advances from six to five

Heavyweights
Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 50-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 30-1 (23)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 48-1 (34)
5. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 15-0 (11)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-1-1 (17)
7. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-6 (26)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **JOHN RUIZ** Chelsea, MA 43-7-1 (29)

Jr. Middleweights
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
2. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 42-10-1 (21)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-5 (11)
5. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
6. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
7. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 35-0 (22)
8. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
9. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-4-1 (23)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 41-1-1 (21)

Featherweights
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 22-1-1 (15)
2. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 41-0-1 (22)
3. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
4. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 35-1 (15)
5. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-2 (19)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
7. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
9. **NICKY COOK** England 28-1(16)
10. **TAKAHIRO AOH** Japan 16-0-1 (8)

Jr. Featherweights
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 43-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-5 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 27-0 (10)
5. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 32-1 (21)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 28-4 (18)
8. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 54-3-1 (43)
9. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 25-1(19)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE** England 14-1(6)

Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 23-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 61-3-2 (43)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 21-2 (17)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 53-6-2 (36)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 37-6 (31)
7. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
8. **ABNER MARES** Montebello, CA 16-0 (10)
9. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)
10. **ANSELMO MORENO** Panama 21-1-1 (8)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 21-1 (20)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **TOMASZ ADAMEK**
Poland 34-1 (23)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2 (31)
5. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
6. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-3-1 (24)
7. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-2 (21)
8. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 20-1 (14)
9. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
10. **RUDOLF KRAJ**
Germany 14-0 (10)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 48-5-1 (32)
2. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-4 (19)
3. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 26-0 (17)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 47-12-2 (32)
5. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 29-0 (17)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
7. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-4-1 (24)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 25-0 (15
9. **CHRIS HENRY**
Houston, TX 21-1 (17)
10. **JUERGEN BRAEHMER**
Germany 31-1 (25)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 45-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 31-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 22-0 (18)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 27-1 (21)
5. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 26-3-2 (16)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 27-2-1 (17)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 33-0 (29)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 26-0 (21)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 29-2-1 (13)
4. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 29-2 (14)
5. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 23-1 (16)
6. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
7. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-8 (42)
8. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)
9. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 34-12 (22)
10. **GIOVANNI LORENZO**
New York, NY 26-0 (18)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 32-0 (26)
2. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
3. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 25-1 (19)
4. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-1 (24)
5. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 36-5 (26)
6. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
7. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 34-2 (20)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
9. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-2 (27)
10. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 27-1 (23)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 24-1 (5)
3. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Germany 29-2-1 (13)
4. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-1 (13)
5. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
6. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
7. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 46-9-1 (31)
8. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
9. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
10. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 36-3-1 (22)

1. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 32-5-1 (25)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 34-1-1 (17)
3. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-1 (17)
4. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
5. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-1 (20)
7. **AMIR KHAN**
England 17-0 (13)
8. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 21-2 (14)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 46-3-2 (35)

1. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-4-1 (35)
2. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
3. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 23-0 (23)
4. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
5. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
6. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 26-1 (19)
7. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 51-3-1 (40)
8. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 35-3-1 (18)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-4 (10)
10. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 27-4 (19)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 36-2-1 (27)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-2 (27)
3. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 34-3-2 (14)
4. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 11-1 (7)
5. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 48-4-1 (37)
6. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3-1 (9)
7. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-4 (12)
8. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-3 (17)
9. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-2 (15)
10. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1-1 (23)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-3 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 67-3-1 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 32-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 26-0-2 (16)
6. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
7. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 43-1-1 (18)
8. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
9. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 17-0 (11)
10. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 26-4-1 (19)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 31-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
3. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 31-5 (16)
4. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
5. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
6. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 25-5-2 (14)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)
9. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 17-1 (8)
10. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 44-10-7 (21)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 23-1-3 (9)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 26-0 (10)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 21-3 (9)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
8. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)
9. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 17-0 (13)
10. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 22-0-1 (15)

By Jeff Ryan

What's Up With That?

Brass knuckles, brass balls, and getting down to brass tacks. That sums up some of the goings-on in the fight game during a recent stretch that sure said more about boxing's characters than its character. Here are the first thoughts that popped into my head upon learning about ...

•Bernard Hopkins', uh, explanation: "The Executioner's" candor has always made him one of my favorite boxing personalities, but his December comment about Joe Calzaghe ("I ain't ever gonna lose to a white boy.") was just plain stupid. What was worse, though, was Hopkins' attempt, a few weeks before his clash with the Welshman, to clarify that earlier remark.

"What I said was a social comment," explained Hopkins, apparently mistaking himself for a panelist on *The McLaughlin Group*. "Where I come from, in the North Philly projects, in the State Penitentiary, and especially in the boxing ring, I never saw a white face. So it's unacceptable that a white guy can defeat me after what I've had to drag myself up from."

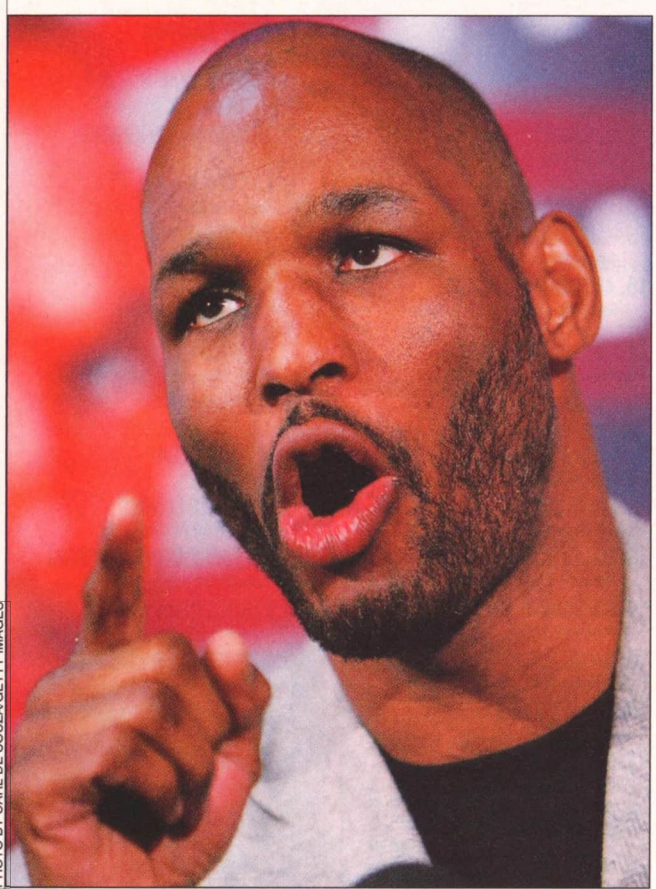


PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/GETTY IMAGES

Hopkins: Social commentary or trash talk?

Hopkins, who pointed out that most of his handlers are white, and who has been extremely cooperative with me in the past, is no racist. He just sounds like one by playing up the foolish stereotype that Caucasians are inferior fighters. What "B-Hop" needs to be reminded is that there are plenty of white guys in Canastota. Not to mention a white guy on the scene that fights pretty damn well, and his name isn't Calzaghe, Klitschko, or Kessler. It's Kelly Pavlik. Perhaps Hopkins has heard of him. He's the guy who twice defeated Jermain Taylor. The same Jermain Taylor who beat Hopkins—twice.

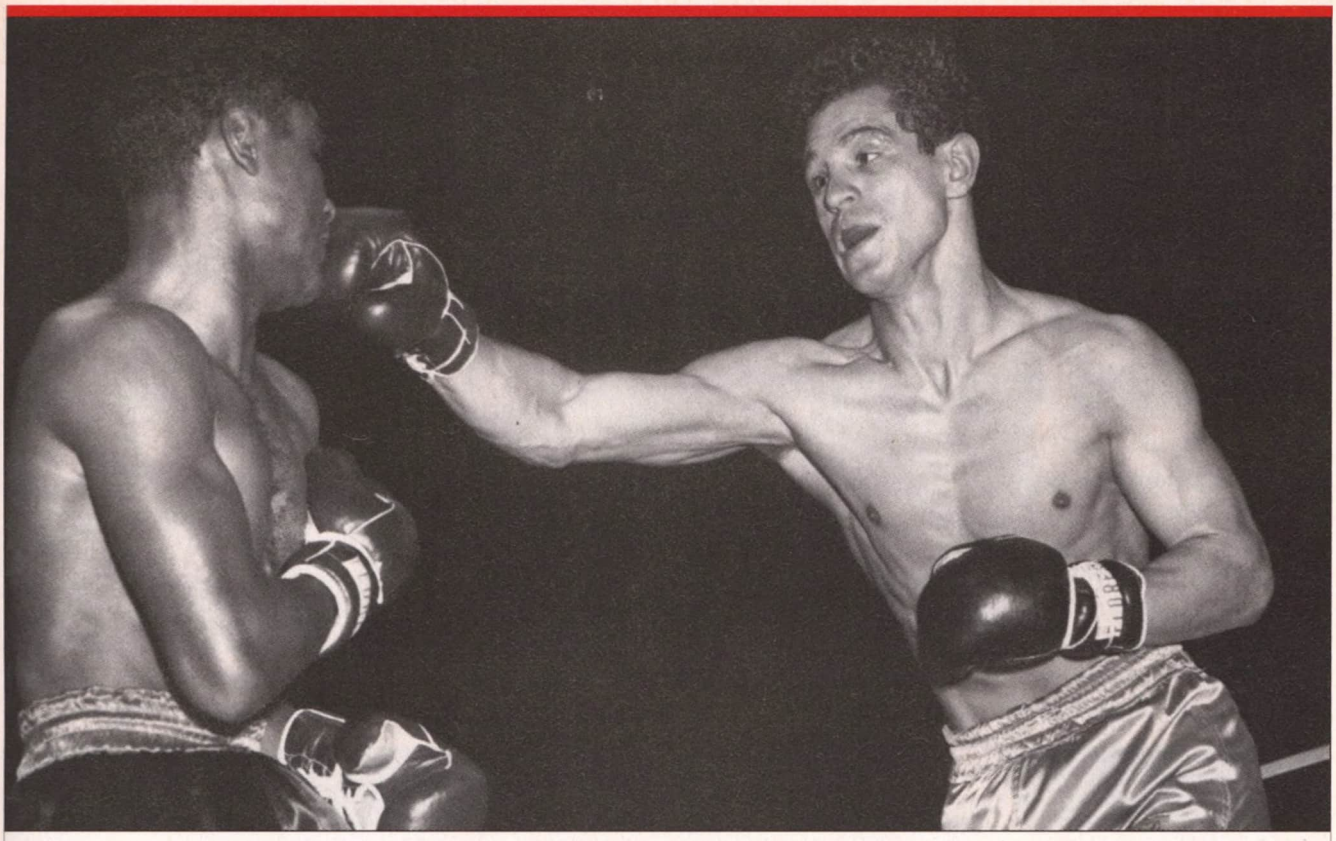
•The best laid plans of mice and maulers: There's a reason boxers box and promoters promote (with the exception, of course, of Oscar De La Hoya, who has managed the tricky juggling act of doing both).

In the span of two weeks this spring, Mayweather laid out plans for a Wembley Stadium rematch with Ricky Hatton in 2009 (Hey, Floyd, you've been there and done that), middleweight champion Pavlik revealed his desire to campaign as a heavyweight one day, junior lightweight Manny Pacquiao suggested that he'd move all the way up to welterweight and face De La Hoya for $30-million (figure in De La Hoya's purse on top of that and pay-per-view would cost roughly $859.95 per home), and cruiserweight titlist David Haye, all 198 pounds of him, boasted that he'd challenge 238-pound heavyweight star Wladimir Klitschko right now, sans tuneup. Oh, brother.

You wonder what would be worse, these guys making their own matchups or a shirtless Don King and Bob Arum going 10 rounds at the MGM Grand. For pure cluelessness, go with the former.

•The death of Art Aragon: The original "Golden Boy" was an incredible drawing card in Los Angeles during the 1940s and '50s, packing the Olympic Auditorium with fans that turned out simply to root against him. He wore a gold robe and trunks, fired a punishing left hook, and smiled smugly at the hostile crowd whenever he defeated one of their heroes, saying it was "exciting" to get booed by 10,000 people. Aragon was a former lover of actress Mamie Van Doren and a friend of Marilyn Monroe, Sophia Loren, and Jayne Mansfield. Wow! With friends like that, who needed ring enemies?

Because his heyday—inside and outside the ropes—was before my time, my only memory of Aragon was his



The original "Golden Boy" tags Henry Davis with a right in 1953

appearance as a guest on a talk show in the late-'80s. Not surprisingly, he was his usual provocative self, particularly when he got on the nerves of former heavyweight great Ken Norton. After the Golden Boy kept referring to the fighters of Norton's era as "bums," the exasperated one-time conqueror of Ali turned to the audience. Only half-kidding, Norton asked, "Does anybody have a ball bat?"

Years later, Norton would tell me, "That type of person irritates me. The sound of his voice, the way he projects it, the way he phrases certain sentences bothers me. His behavior indicated that he was someone who had been hit with too many punches. He didn't want to shut up."

•WrestleMania 24: Floyd Mayweather's brass-knuckles kayo of Big Show was no surprise considering that the "Pretty Boy" has never failed to deliver at crunch time. (And a pair of brass knuckles to the noggin is the true definition of *crunch* time.) By the way, where did Mayweather learn that chair-swinging technique of his? He handles a folding chair the way Zab Judah wields a ring stool.

Too bad WWE honcho Vince McMahon hadn't done a better job of recruiting fighters through the years. Just imagine all the fun if Riddick Bowe, Rock Newman, and the rest of the thugs in that entourage had been involved in something like this.

•The Spinks Jinx: That used to be the nickname for Michael Spinks' lethal right cross. Now, though, it could also refer to the inability of Michael and his brother, Leon, to help Cory Spinks when "The Next Generation" dropped the IBF light middleweight crown to Verno Phillips in March. Leon and Michael took over in the corner following Cory's break from long-time trainer Kevin Cunningham. Unfortunately, Cory couldn't punch like Dad and Uncle Mike even if he borrowed Mayweather's foreign object.

Seeing Leon and Michael together brought back great memories of the '76 Olympics, but also of their brief reigns as two of the most unlikely linear heavyweight kings in history. In only his eighth pro bout, Leon dethroned the incomparable Muhammad Ali, then relinquished the crown in a rematch and went a sorry 19-16-2 the rest of his career. Michael won the belt by handing Larry Holmes his first defeat in 49 outings, made three defenses, then, after getting pasted by Mike Tyson in 91 seconds, never fought again.

How would the Spinkses fare on the current heavyweight landscape? Probably fairly well. Leon lacked polish, but with his desire and aggression, he'd outwork a lot of today's lazy big men. And Michael possessed enough technical skills and smarts to ascend to, or near, the top if he could avoid getting caught by a serious banger along the way. The Spinks Brothers vs. The Klitschko Brothers. That's a tag-team match not even Vince McMahon could resist.

•ESPN Classic's dearth of programming: Your trusty columnist, the Laird Hamilton of channel-surfing, was giving the old remote control a real stress test one evening when he flipped to ESPN Classic. Granted, the once-great cable outlet seems a little desperate to fill airtime these days (billiards, drag racing, *Arli$$* reruns), but on this night it was actually featuring *The Best Of Butterbean II.*

Let me get this straight: They couldn't fit all of The Bean's greatness into *one* show? Or did the folks at ESPN Classic just want to give us, fittingly, a second helping? ■

By Ivan Goldman

Jobbed Fighters Meet Mixed Fortunes

Joel Casamayor's kayo victory over Michael Katsidis was impressive, but it failed to erase that loony decision Casamayor got over Jose Armando Santa Cruz back in November 2007. As all the lightweights jockey for big-money position and a chance against the purse-inflating Manny Pacquiao, who apparently is stepping up to their weight class, it's more than possible Santa Cruz will be left out of the mix. We've seen it happen before.

After Felix Sturm got jobbed by the judges against Oscar De La Hoya in June 2005, he picked up a couple of alphabet titles but went off U.S. radar.

When Steve Forbes boxed the ears off Demetrius Hopkins, fans were aghast when the judges turned in three lopsided scores for the nephew of Bernard Hopkins. Less than a year later, I heard a TV analyst mention Hopkins as one of five fighters who'd defeated Forbes. There was no

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Did controversial loss to Casamayor knock Santa Cruz out of the title mix?

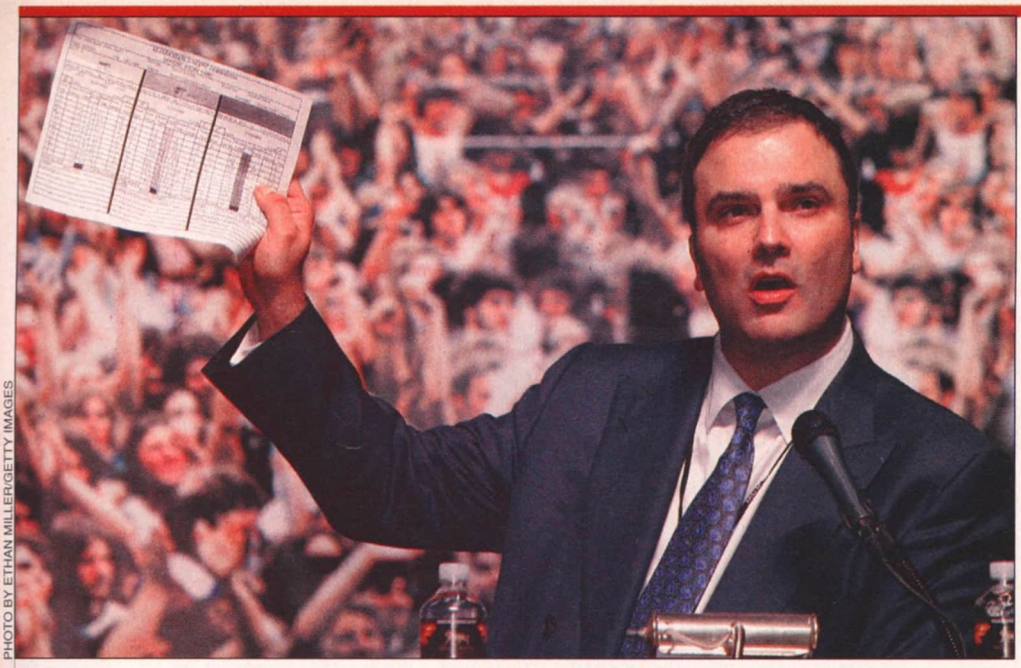


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Schaefer questions possible scorecard discrepancy following Mayweather-De La Hoya

mention of what had really transpired that night. There are no asterisks in boxing.

It's encouraging that the thoroughly jobbed Forbes wasn't hustled off to obscurity, but got a call instead to share the spotlight with De La Hoya on Cinco de Mayo weekend. But sometimes after you shake hands on a deal, you need to count your fingers, and this one was made at a 150-pound catch weight. Forbes, 33-5 (9), has competed around 150, but here's an interesting factoid. In August 2004, he got down to 130 to challenge Yodsanan Sor Nathachai for a super featherweight title and lost. At the time, De La Hoya was fighting 30 pounds north at middleweight.

But even the superstar, super-connected Oscar has been banged around in the scoring follies. And I'm not talking about the Felix Trinidad or Shane Mosley encounters. Remember his loss to Floyd Mayweather? It's practically been forgotten just how close that split-decision contest was. Though Oscar faded toward the end, he racked up some excellent rounds early on, and he was the aggressor throughout. The fight was the turning point in Mayweather's career. Afterward, he was a crossover star who could earn millions for slamming a folding chair over a wrestler's noggin. But something odd occurred the night of the first Mayweather-De La Hoya showdown. Rarely mentioned in the spot news stories, it became a factoid that faded from history as though it never happened.

After the scores were announced and the HBO crew closed the show, those of us hanging around the MGM Grand for the postfight media conference received word from Golden Boy CEO Richard Schaefer that something could be amiss in the scorecard transcription. Numbers for one judge had possibly been transposed, with Mayweather scores going to De La Hoya and visa versa. There was a chance that two judges saw it for Oscar, not Mayweather, and the crown of victory had mistakenly been placed on the wrong head.

We all waited around the ring apron as Schaefer tried to sort out the truth in a series of phone calls.

"Mayweather bettors are already collecting their money," I told Larry Merchant. "Oscar bettors are already tearing up their tickets. This could be one of the worst blunders in the history of boxing."

Merchant replied, "We're not in the gambling business.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Goldman gets ready to belt Casamayor

We just want to make sure we get the right score."

Merchant was correct, of course. But the fight game, like all major sports, is chained to the gambling business, whether it likes it or not. At that moment, they stood on the deck of the Titanic looking down into dark, dark waters. If the decision were reversed, legal sports books and extralegal bookies all over the world could wind up paying both sides of a huge betting handle, depending on how soon bettors showed up for their winnings.

If the result were reversed, I envisioned people all over town bumping heads in a mad scramble for discarded winning tickets that could be anywhere and everywhere. All those Mike Tyson-inspired free-for-alls would look playful by comparison. And before casinos mopped up the blood, news hounds would be ferreting out thousands of stories of hosed bettors. The residual lack of trust could last years, lifetimes even. *I ever tell you about the time my granddaddy threw away a betting stub worth $40,000? He took to drinking and his wife left him. But before he fell in front of that freight train, he made me swear an oath I'd never watch a prizefight. Exactly what were prizefights anyway?*

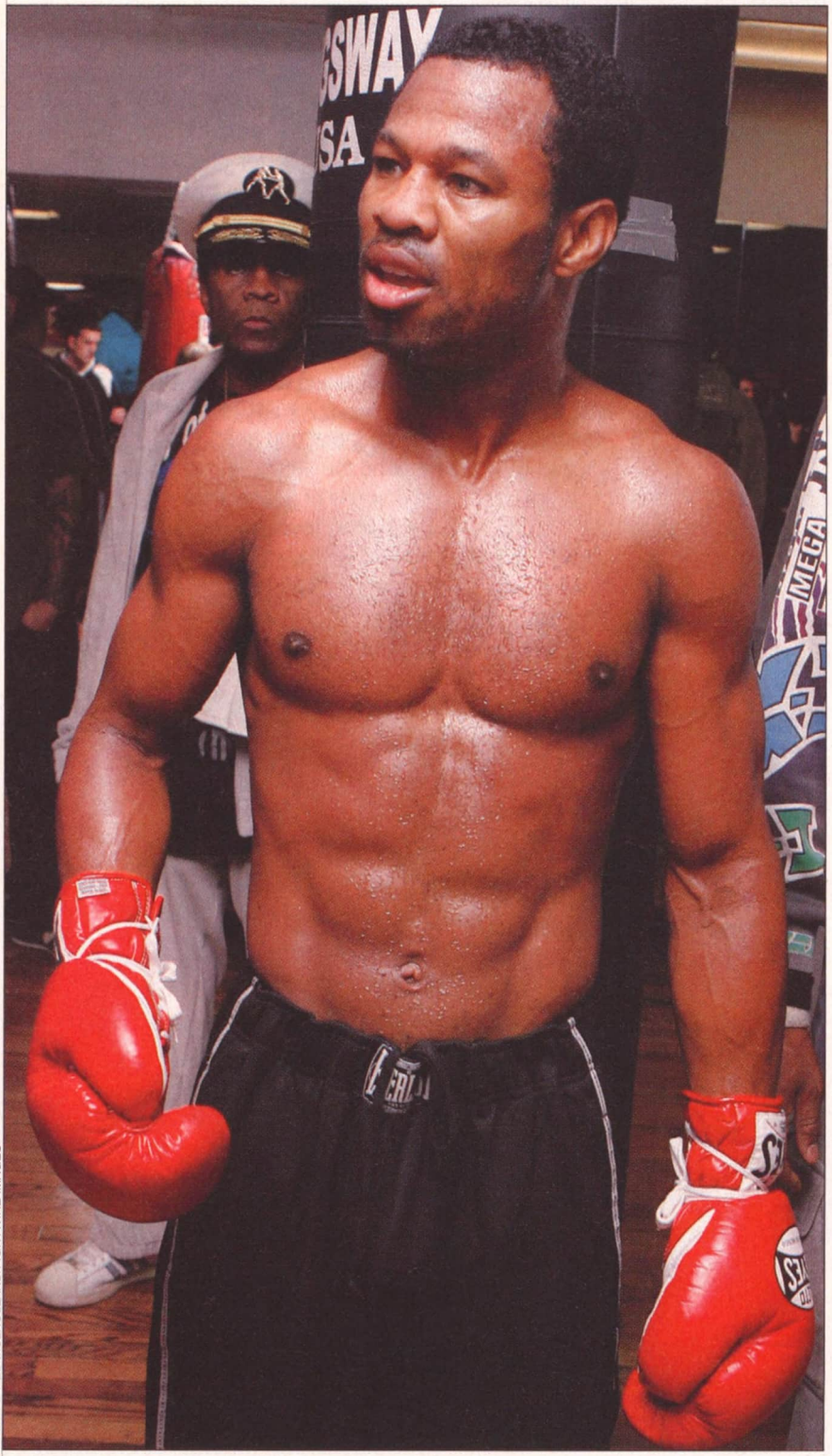


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mosley is suing BALCO boss over steroid allegations

Eventually, Schaefer announced he'd found someone from the commission who told him the Mayweather decision was correct and still stood. But I remember thinking then about trust and how it's the foundation beneath all the Vegas casinos. Mob guys who built the town swindled the IRS and each other, but they were smart enough not to cheat their customers. And when corporations took over, they kept the tables legit. A betting debacle like this could have undermined that carefully constructed structure. I asked myself if the commission, just another gear in the casino machinery, had learned the scores were transposed, would commissioners have ruled differently? I only asked once.

Mosley Suit: Shane Mosley, by suing convicted steroid dealer Victor Conte for slander, is behaving precisely as an innocent man would. Conte, of the infamous Bay Area Laboratory Cooperative, claimed Mosley knowingly injected steroids. Good guy Mosley never seemed to fit the cheater profile, and he said that his relationship with BALCO in 2003 was "one little hiccup" that "should never have happened, and it won't happen again."

Okay Stoppage: Did Jon Schorle step in a bit early when he waved it off in the 10th round for

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

Did Spinks jinx himself by mixing it up with Phillips?

Casamayor? HBO's Max Kellerman seemed to think so, along with scattered grumblers in the media section. But Kellerman muted his criticism, probably because he understands that a referee in proper position—where Schorle was—can look straight into a fighter's eyes and maybe even down into the spirit of his soul. He can gauge his alertness and perhaps, just as important, his appetite. Sometimes a man's eyes tell you the spirit is broken.

From my position a few rows back, the Aussie's defense didn't look any more porous at the end than it had been for the previous 9½ rounds. In other words, he still had no defense. A banger like Katsidis can end up taking even more punishment because the ref knows one well-timed, well-placed punch could change the whole picture. Katsidis was clearly disappointed when Schorle stepped in, but he also looked relieved.

Incidentally, as you watched the usual suspects crowd into the ring, you may have wondered, just as I have a thousand times, what are all those clowns doing in there anyway? In this particular case, if you looked carefully, you could spot one of the clowns handing THE RING lightweight belt back to Casamayor. Kind of fun, actually.

Smile, You're (Not) On TV: Cory Spinks-Verno Phillips was a match made far from heaven. But I won't gloat over the fact that Don King couldn't get his bogus junior middleweight "championship" contest on TV. Even stick-and-run Spinks (who reportedly got drawn into some serious exchanges this time and paid a price) deserves a righteous payday, something difficult to obtain when no TV networks are about.

Of course showman King tried to put a good face on it, placing the fight on the Internet and pronouncing that an exciting new departure in the world of sports. Sure.

Promoter Gripes: Who can blame fans for suspecting scores aren't always on the up-and-up when the promoters running the sport routinely fan the flames of suspicion? "I find it strange that the week before the fight, suddenly a judge is being changed, and guess how this judge scored." That was Golden Boy's Schaefer railing against judge Tom Miller, who scored the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez 114-113 for Pacquiao against Golden Boy's Marquez. If a baseball club owner said that about an umpire, he'd be fined a gazillion bucks.

This particular switch came about after Pacquiao trainer Freddie Roach, a true straight arrow, reported that judge Dick Flaherty was a friend of his family, so Flaherty was switched with Miller, who'd originally been assigned to the co-event, Steven Luevano-Terdsak Jandaeng. Incidentally, horrendous scores by Flaherty have been previously documented in this column. The fact that someone flew him all the way from Boston to Las Vegas to judge a boxing contest is disturbing evidence that the world is not a rational place.

Magoo: You'd think after 11½ entertaining rounds of polished rough stuff, a fighter who gets tagged has earned the right to clinch, or, in this case, dance and keep his distance a minute or so. But when Luevano did just that in round 12 of his featherweight clash with Jandaeng, what did some fans in the Mandalay Bay do? They booed. ■

Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

A "white boy" may have managed to beat a black man in the Joe Calzaghe-Bernard Hopkins fight, but beating the game of blackjack is considerably harder. Thankfully for Calzaghe, he stood in the dealer position when he posed at this special fight-themed table at Planet Hollywood, the one seat that usually comes out ahead.

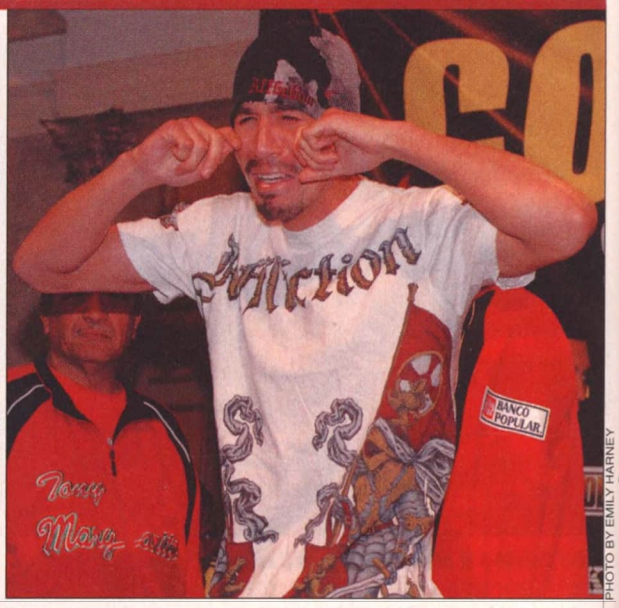


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

When you sign a sponsorship contract with the Affliction brand, it's not enough to wear the Affliction T-shirt and the Affliction hat; you're also obligated to make the Affliction face. Antonio Margarito has the Affliction face down pat, demonstrating the ultimate look of pain and suffering—and he even earned a bonus from his sponsor for convincing Kermit Cintron to make the same face six rounds into their April bout.

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Is it a rock concert or a boxing match? One thing is for sure: Arthur Abraham definitely rocked Elvin Ayala's world when they met in March in Kiel, Germany. After this over-the-top ring entrance, Abraham went on to knock Ayala out in the 12th round—and he did it all by himself, with no help from any backup singers.

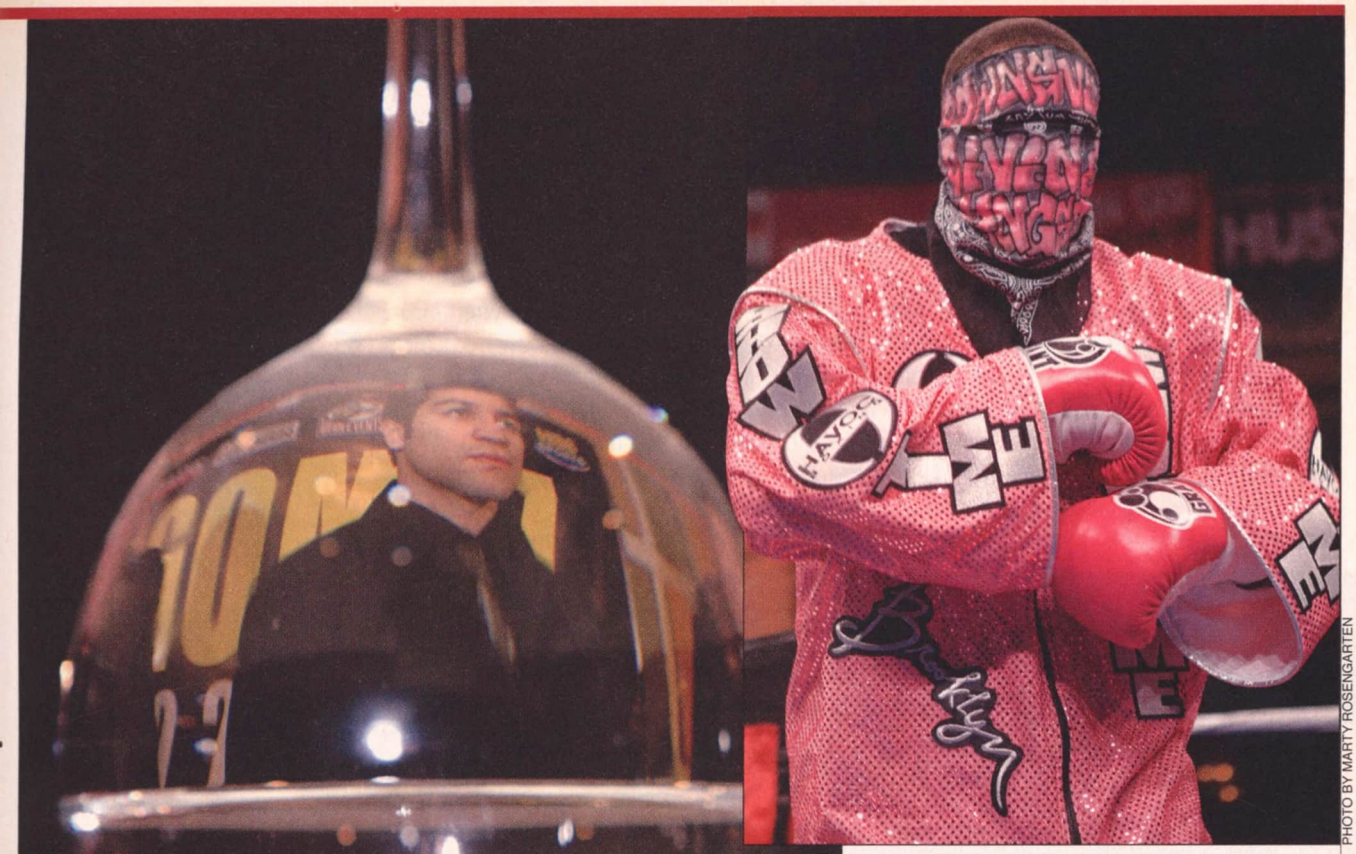


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

And fighting out of the red corner, the Invisible Man! Other than the top of his head, there's no evidence that super middleweight Curtis Stevens' body is actually inside his clothes, but as opponent Thomas Reid learned the hard way, Stevens was in fact present for their March fight in New York. Stevens won via eighth-round knockout, and by the time it was over, "Showtime" wasn't so ashamed to show his face around town.

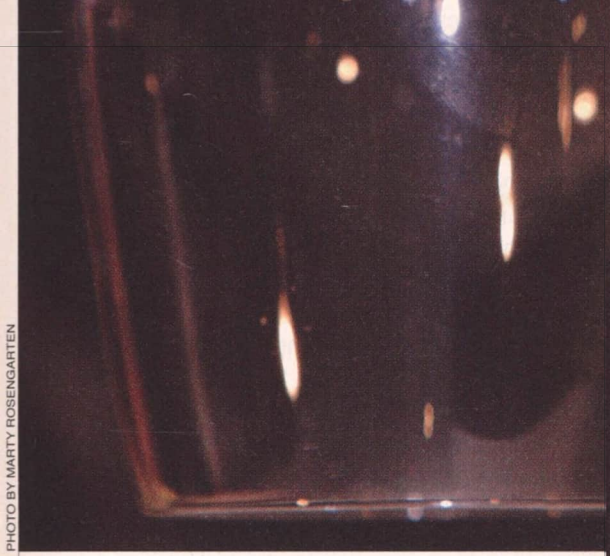


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

If you've ever wondered whether Alfonso Gomez is an optimist or a pessimist, the answer lies in the fact that his reflection takes up the half-full side of this glass. And as an optimist, he's surely spent his time since his fight with Miguel Cotto counting his money, rather than thinking about what happened in the ring.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

The good news for featherweight Gary Stark is that he won a unanimous decision in his March fight against Andres Ledesma. The bad news is—well, do we really have to spell out for you what the bad news is? We're going to go out on a limb and guess that Ledesma landed his left hand a few times during this fight.

By Joe Santoliquito

Mike Jones Welterweight

Mike Jones couldn't escape it. Sitting alone in his living room, in the shadow of the soft bluish glow of his widescreen TV, the punches came at him in panoramic clarity. Wincing, he could still feel them. There was a counter left hook that caught him in the mouth. Another left hook that nailed him right on the chin. There was Jones, reeling backward, his head being dribbled off the end of a jab.

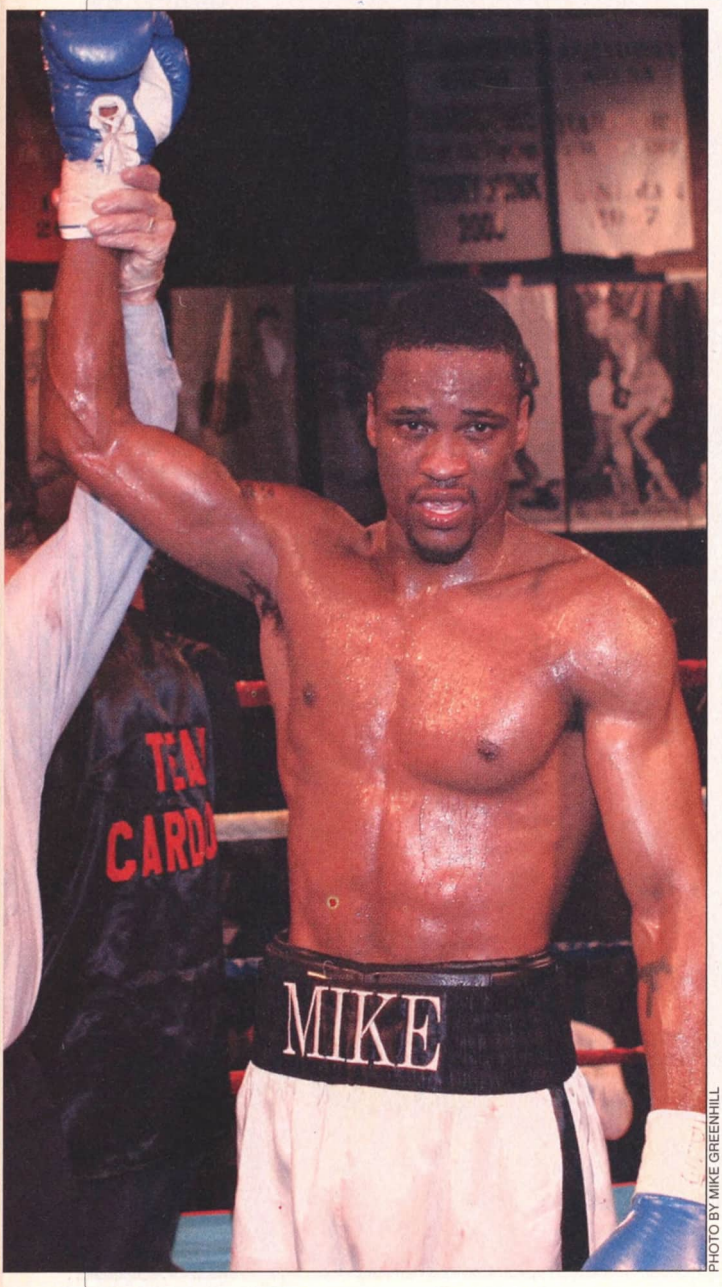


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Then there was Jones again, his hand being raised in victory, as he mumbled to himself "This will never happen again."

If Jones one day goes on to be a titlist or even a world champion, he'll be able to look back appreciatively on what he learned fighting veteran journeyman Germaine Sanders. The problem was that Jones' classroom was a national TV telecast, with ESPN2's *Friday Night Fights* cameras revealing every second to hundreds of thousands of viewers.

Pro Record

2005		
Dec. 16	Jason Thompson, Philadelphia, PA	KO 2
2006		
March 3	Chris Gray, Philadelphia	KO 2
June 2	Ronny Glover, Philadelphia	KO 1
Sept. 29	Todd Dillon, Philadelphia	KO 1
Nov. 17	Jason Jordan, Philadelphia	KO 1
2007		
Jan. 15	Donnie Fosmire, Washington, D.C.	KO 3
March 2	Francisco Maldonado, Philadelphia	KO 2
May 4	Gilbert Guevara, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
July 20	Doel Carrasquillo, Philadelphia	KO 2
Aug. 31	Martinus Clay, Niagara Falls, NY	KO 5
Oct. 5	Richard Hall, Philadelphia	KO 1
Nov. 9	Israel Cardona, Philadelphia	KO 3
2008		
March 28	Germaine Sanders, Salamanca, NY	W 8

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
13	13	0	0	2

It would have made things a little more palatable for Jones had it been a club show in front of a few hundred. It's why the 24-year old, 5'11" welterweight struggled for weeks after driving his record to a pristine 13-0 (12). The thought of fight fans tuning in that late-March night and seeing his D-game, not something even remotely close to his best, plagued the Philadelphia-based Jones.

"Everyone that knows me was wondering what was wrong that night," Jones said. "I watched a tape of the fight and the only thing that won it for me was the jab. It was my worst performance as a pro—by far. That was me at 50 percent. I had to watch by myself, and I hated it. It looked real ugly, but I had to watch. It was something I forced myself to do. I kept asking myself, *Damn, did I do that?* I felt better watching it than being in there that night, but not much better.

"I'm not the kind of guy who makes excuses, but that just wasn't me. It wasn't. I won, but I sucked. It's nothing I'm proud of. My wind was good, but I wasn't as strong as I could have been. I was very sick right before the fight. I was just coming off surgery on my left hand and I didn't get very much sparring in either. I had a bunch of obstacles going into the fight. I could have backed out, but I didn't want to because it was a good opportunity, being on ESPN. How many young fighters look for a chance like that and don't get it? I couldn't pass that up. Besides, the flip side is that I know now I can still pull out a victory when I'm not at my best."

Prior to meeting Sanders, Jones had looked frighteningly good. He had slugged his way to 12 straight victories, stop-

(Continued on 116)

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CALZAGHE EDGES HOPKINS

An Ugly Changing Of The Guard

By Nigel Collins

Except for the fact that the corpse was very much alive, the deposed champion's dressing room seemed eerily like a wake. Bernard Hopkins sat at the back of the room, surrounded by his family, friends, and most-trusted retainers, all of whom wore suitably sullen expressions. Yet despite allegedly absorbing more than 230 punches, his grizzled face was virtually unmarked.

Hopkins sounded more puzzled than angry as he spoke about the split-decision loss to Joe Calzaghe, which had just cost him the light heavyweight championship of the world. His words seemed designed more to comfort and reassure than to argue the point. Like all fighters involved in a close fight, he thought he'd won, but as the final minutes of April 19 slipped away and the inevitability of the verdict sank in, hopefully the 43-year-old future Hall of Famer was also coming to grips

PHOTO BY WILL HART

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Calzaghe got off to a rocky start when Hopkins knocked him down in the opening round with a right to the head. But the Welshman beat referee Joe Cortez' count, and Hopkins never had him in serious trouble again.

with the inescapable certainty that nobody can stop the march of time.

An hour or so later, back at the Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, which hosted the so-called "Battle Of The Planets," Calzaghe was addressing the joyful throng of supporters who had flown in from Wales to cheer their handsome hero on to victory. "Super Joe" had slain the dragon, and even if it was an old dragon, whose fire has been largely replaced by smoke and mirrors, their faith in this quiet man from the Welsh Valleys had been vindicated. All was well in their little corner of the world.

Then, as if to confirm Calzaghe's elevation to a higher plane, Robert Earl, founder and CEO of Planet Hollywood, whisked the new champion and his entourage away, escorted them up the escalator, and on to a celebrity-studded private party. The common masses from which Calzaghe sprang didn't seem to mind. They were happy to drink and gamble the night away, secure in the knowledge their "Ordinary Joe" would be back among them soon enough. Not even Earl, the founder and former president of Hard Rock Cafe, could turn Calzaghe Hollywood.

Sometimes, when a world championship passes from a long-established but aging fighter to a younger, fresher man, it marks the dawning of a bright new era. It's one of boxing's classic themes, and maybe one day we will look back and see Calzaghe's defeat of Hopkins in exactly that light. Still, an emphatic win, preferably via spectacular knockout, is always the best way to replace one star with another, which is the one thing Calzaghe failed to deliver.

This was supposed to be his coming-out party before an American audience, and it was broadcast on regular HBO, instead of pay-per-view, all the better to give as many Yanks as possible an opportunity to see him in action. Just like THE RING 175-pound championship belt, the affection of the U.S. fans was up for grabs. Calzaghe took the title by split decision, but how much headway he made toward becoming as big a star in America as he is back home is debatable. If he gained any new fans outside of the U.K., they are most likely folks who have grown weary of Hopkins' boring style and would be delighted to see the back of him.

Many would love to dump all the blame for a highly forgettable fight on Hopkins, and thanks to the shut-down-the-other-guy style the Philadelphian has mastered in his dotage, he's the logical culprit. But is it really that simple? Was it all Hopkins' fault? Don't you also have to ask why Calzaghe was so severely tested by a geriatric spoiler?

Where, exactly, this leaves Calzaghe as an attraction in the United States remains to be seen. Still, regardless of how things develop as he goes forward, Calzaghe took a sizable risk leaving the friendly confines of Wales and taking on the unenviable job of fighting a living legend on his home turf. True, Las Vegas isn't Philadelphia, but it sure as hell isn't Cardiff either. Moreover, it should not be overlooked that Calzaghe's first fight as a light heavyweight was against the world

champion. You can't ask for more than that.

Calzaghe fought with the same unshakable resolve and hyper work rate that had kept him undefeated in 44 previous outings. As in his fight with Mikkel Kessler, he responded well to adversity. The first-round knockdown he suffered in this fight, compliments of a Hopkins right hand, would have emotionally depleted lesser men. But even though it took him a couple of rounds to gather himself, the resilient Welshman put the knockdown behind him, adjusted his fight plan, and fought his way back.

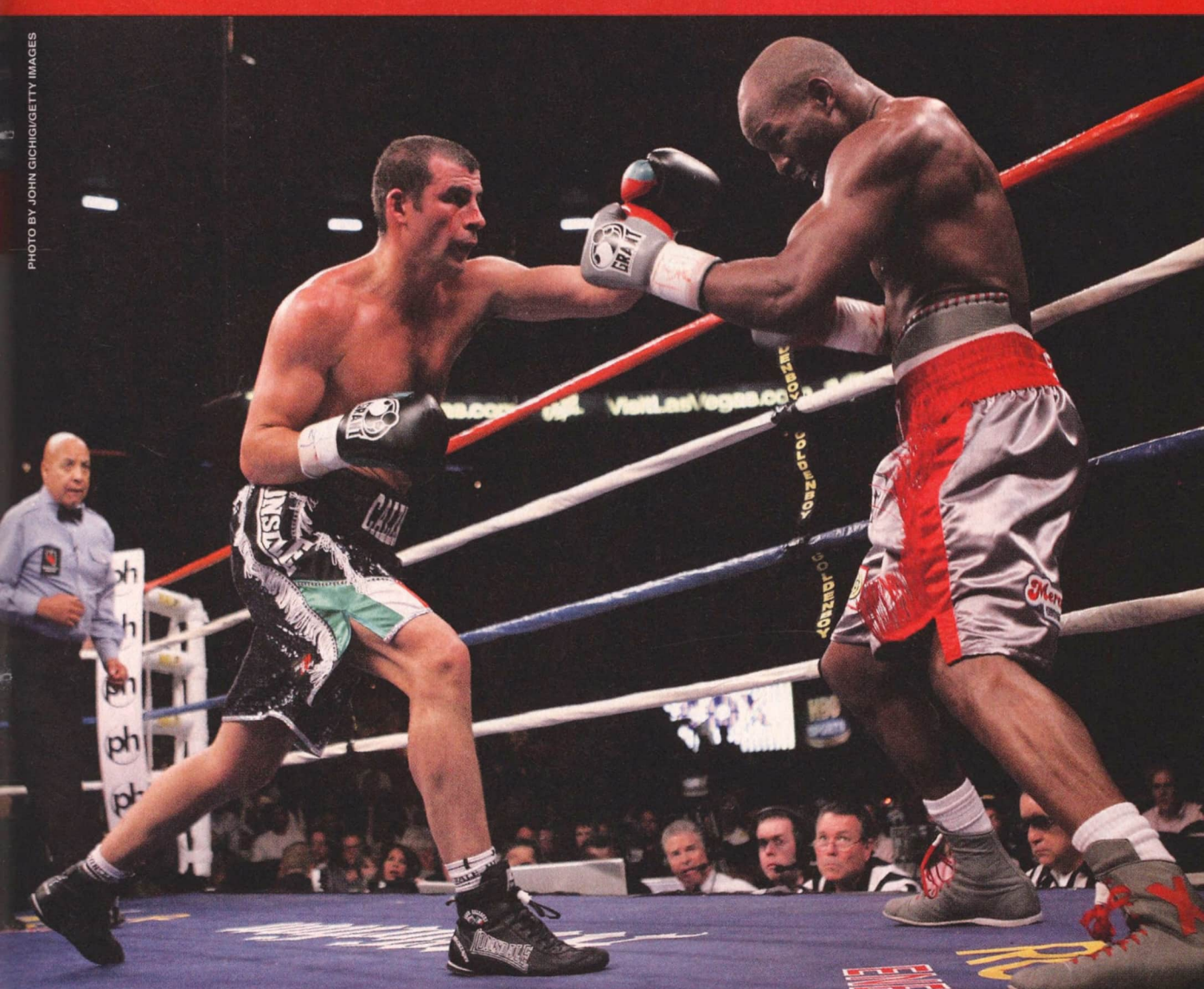
For Calzaghe, beating Hopkins was a personal triumph, the high-water mark of a pristine career. Like Ricky Hatton, he'd spoken freely of how headlining a big show in Las Vegas was "a dream come true." But Calzaghe is no wide-eyed stargazer. He was unfazed by Hopkins' reputation and trash talk, and never distracted from the job at hand by the madness of big-fight week in Vegas.

In a larger context, however, it was not the sort of fight likely to start a box-office stampede the next time Calzaghe fights on this side of the Atlantic, or as Ed Graney wrote in the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, "No sober soul—which didn't appear to include any of the giddy ones draped in the flag of Wales—could have walked away overly awed with Calzaghe."

To his credit, Calzaghe's own assessment was untainted by either alcohol or delusions of grandeur. "I knew it wouldn't be pretty," he said. "I didn't box as well as I could have. It's difficult to look good against somebody like Hopkins. He was so awkward. He gave me some big shots. It wasn't my best night, but I won the fight."

When Hopkins first joined Calzaghe at the postfight press conference, he

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES



Once Calzaghe shook off the effects of the first-round knockdown, he regained his momentum and took the fight to the defending champion. Although it was never easy, Calzaghe's greater punch output and fresher legs carried him to a narrow victory.

seemed to be in a relatively mellow mood. The words were strong, but the delivery constrained.

"I got beat tonight, but not by Joe Calzaghe," said Hopkins. "Everybody's got eyes. I don't have to explain anything. All I can say is, 'Look at me. Do I look like I was in a fight?'"

When a reporter asked him about the CompuBox's stats sheet, which claimed that Calzaghe had landed 232 punches—the most Hopkins has fielded in the 21 fights of his the punch-counting outfit had tracked—he countered just as adroitly as he had in flooring Calzaghe in the opening round.

"If CompuBox was accurate," he said, "I'd look like the Elephant Man right now. My nose should be where my ear is."

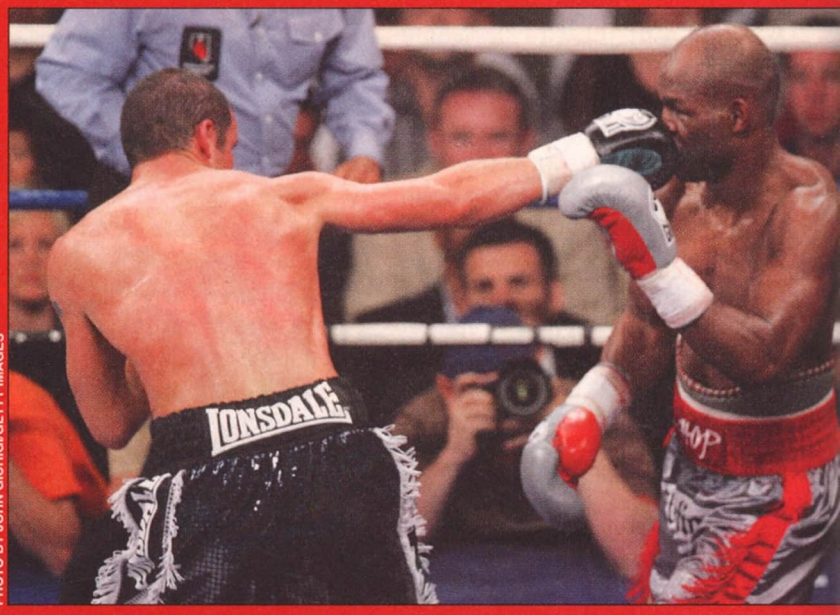


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Nose job: Calzaghe bends B-Hop's beak with a southpaw jab. According to CompuBox, "Super Joe" landed 232 punches (45 of them jabs), compared to 127 connects for Hopkins.

Calzaghe: A High-Octane Performance

Bernard Hopkins lined up the shot with the cunning of a pool shark, and when his right hand flashed out and drilled Joe Calzaghe right between the eyes, the Welshman suddenly found himself on his back. A gasp went up from the announced crowd of 14,213 at the Thomas & Mack Center, and it looked momentarily like boxing's oldest reigning champion was about to beat the odds yet again.

But Hopkins' best moment came in the opening round, and although he kept it close, he never again had Calzaghe in serious trouble. And as the rounds went by, "The Executioner" seemed to age exponentially.

The fight plan that Hopkins had drawn up, along with his training team of Freddie Roach, Naazim Richardson, and John David Jackson, was brilliantly conceived. He would use his legs to outmaneuver his foe, all the while punishing him with sneaky right-hand counters. In retrospect, however, it might have been better for Hopkins, 173, if he had immediately jumped on Calzaghe and gone all-out for the kayo. But he's morphed into a prudent tactician in recent years, and a quick blitz was not part of the blueprint.

Calzaghe, also 173, gradually regained his bearings over the next few rounds and began to find his rhythm. Punches that had missed earlier started to find the target. Hopkins never seemed hurt by the challenger's offerings, but as his fatigue increased, so did the number of punches Calzaghe connected.

By the 10th round, Hopkins' gas tank was perilously close to empty, but Calzaghe did him an unintentional favor by planting a punch well below the belt. It didn't look like a particularly debilitating shot, but Hopkins, reaching deep into his bag of tricks, responded as if he'd be castrated, turning away and crumbling to the canvas. Referee Joe Cortez had no option other than to call timeout and afford Hopkins the five-minute respite he was entitled to under the rules.

The rest interrupted Calzaghe's momentum and briefly rejuvenated the fading champion, who connected with the best right he'd landed since the first round and also delivered a stiff combination just before the bell. It was, however, the last round Hopkins won on THE RING scorecard. Calzaghe, 45-0 (32), outworked him over the final two rounds, aggressively surging forward, hands churning. Hopkins, 48-5-1 (32), never looked hurt; he simply lacked the energy to keep up with the Welsh dynamo.

Hopkins seemed stunned when the split decision went in Calzaghe's favor by scores of 115-112 (Ted Gimza), 116-111 (Chuck Giampa), and 113-114 (Adelaide Byrd). Several members of the press, including ESPN.com's Dan Rafael and Greg Beacham of the Associated Press, agreed with Byrd, but the majority of media felt that the official verdict was correct. THE RING had it even at 114-114, but has no beef with anyone who scored it close for Calzaghe, who said, "I thought it was pretty close, but I thought I had it won."

—N.C.

Hopkins also refused to acknowledge the obvious—that he'd run out of gas late in the fight, which was arguably the biggest factor in his defeat.

"I wasn't slowing down. I was pacing myself for the long haul," he reasoned. "I wanted him to run into my shots, and I think I made him do that, and I think I made it look pretty easy. I controlled the pace, and I controlled the fight. It was an old-school execution. He really wasn't landing his shots. If he threw five or six, one or two landed if he was lucky. You saw a craftsman at his work. I don't have nothing to be ashamed of."

During most of this, Calzaghe sat quietly, allowing the former champion to have his say, but when a reporter asked Hopkins if he gave Calzaghe any credit for his victory, the tenor of the gabfest soon took a testy turn.

"I don't think he won, so I can't give him any credit for winning," barked Hopkins.

Calzaghe could no longer hold his tongue, and there ensued a verbal skirmish that lasted several uncomfortable minutes. And just like he did during the fight, Calzaghe came on strong at the end, firing a withering parting shot as his antagonist left the stage.

"I whipped your ass," Calzaghe yelled after Hopkins. "You got your ass kicked by the white boy."

He was, of course, perfectly within his rights to say so, since much of the promotion had focused on Hopkins' controversial statement that he "would never lose to a white boy." Although the boast eventually came back to bite him in the ass, the ensuing flap kept the story alive for weeks and undoubtedly helped sell the fight.

On the surface, Hopkins remained defiant to the end, but he never asked for a rematch and never said, "I'll be back," the mantra of beaten fighters throughout the ages. He did, however, speak of wanting to spend more time with his eight-year-old daughter, "chilling with my family," and "smelling the roses." It wasn't exactly a retirement speech, but Hopkins didn't sound like a man determined to forge ahead regardless of the circumstances.

Even when somebody mentioned that Felix Trinidad wanted a rematch, and Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer leaned into the

Although Calzaghe beat Hopkins, he failed to shut his mouth. The postfight press conference turned nasty when the defiant ex-champ refused to give Calzaghe credit for his victory.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

microphone and said, "Don King has already called me," Hopkins sounded unenthusiastic.

"I don't want to go through that flag-throwing thing again," he replied, curtailing, at least for the time being, further discussion of that particular course of action.

You've got to believe that, deep down inside, a man as intelligent as Hopkins knows that it was Father Time, as much as Calzaghe, that caught up to him down the stretch. Maybe, just maybe, Bernard will now do what so many of his admirers would like him to do—hang up his gloves for good and await the inevitable call from Canastota.

What is more, the Calzaghe fight might be his last chance to go out in style. Hopkins had an earlier opportunity after upsetting Antonio Tarver to win the light heavyweight championship, but traded it for a couple of multimillion-dollar paydays against Winky Wright and Calzaghe.

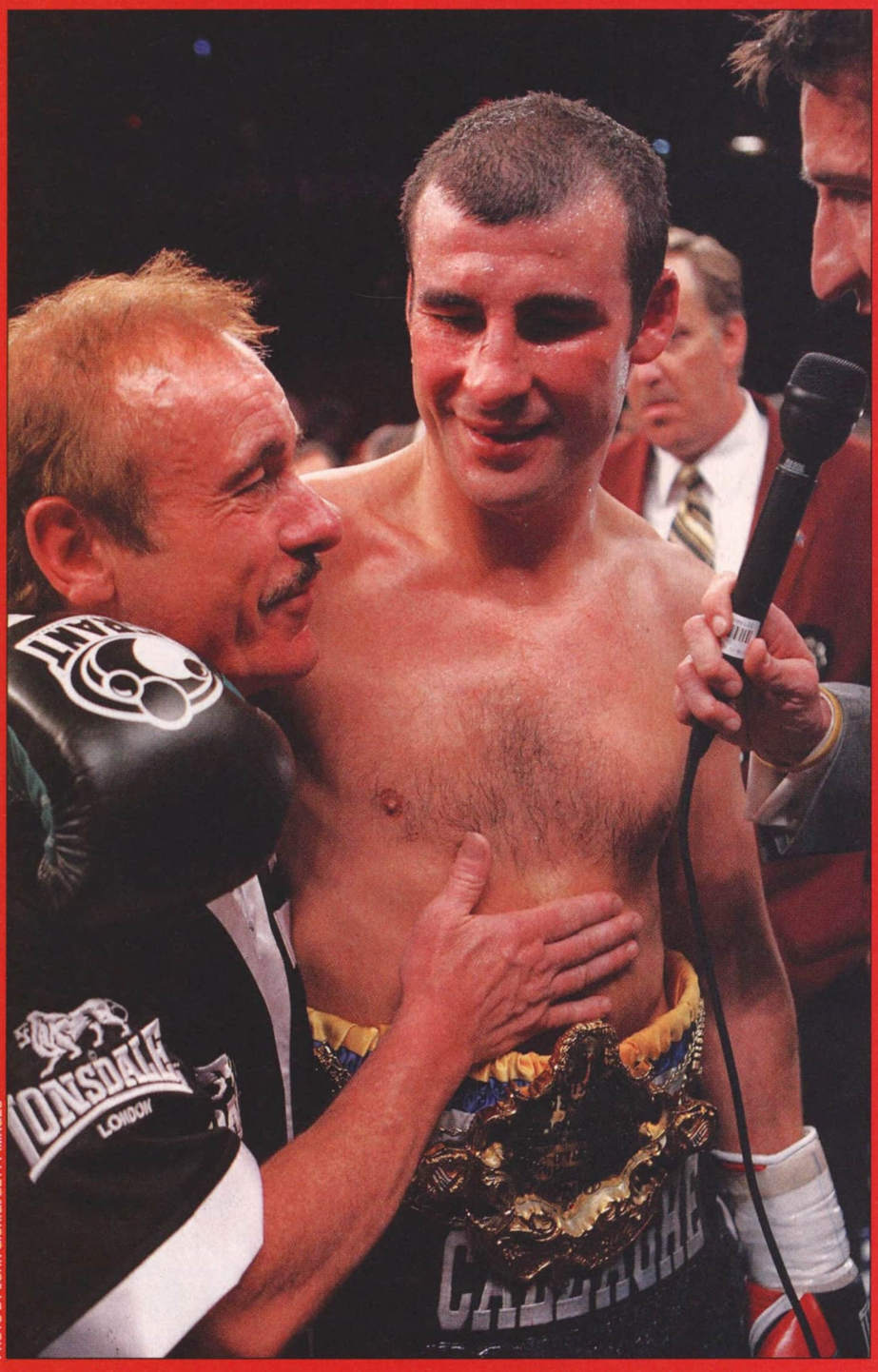


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

The new light heavyweight champion shares his moment of triumph with his father/trainer, Enzo Calzaghe. The successful duo have been together since the start of Joe's career.

Calzaghe's future is more certain than Hopkins', but only in the short term. Roy Jones looks like he has the inside track on Calzaghe's first light heavyweight defense, most likely in Cardiff, where another crowd of 50,000 or more could be expected at Millennium Stadium. But Calzaghe wasn't ready to commit to anything.

"I'm going to go on holiday, come back, and see what my options are," said Calzaghe. "I want to be one of the few fighters who retires undefeated. Too many fighters go on too long, and I don't want to be one of them. I was nine when I began boxing, and as a 26-year-old pro I was telling anyone who would listen that I'd be gone by the time I was 30. Here I am at 36, still throwing punches."

Calzaghe would be favored against any of THE RING's top-10 contenders, including Jones. But a bout with middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, who has already beaten Jermain Taylor at super middleweight this year, would be intriguing and provide the ideal opportunity to bring the Welshman back to the U.S. again.

Calzaghe has said this will be his last year, and he just might mean it this time. But whenever he calls it quits, you get the sense that the decision will be easier for him at that point than it is for Hopkins now. ■

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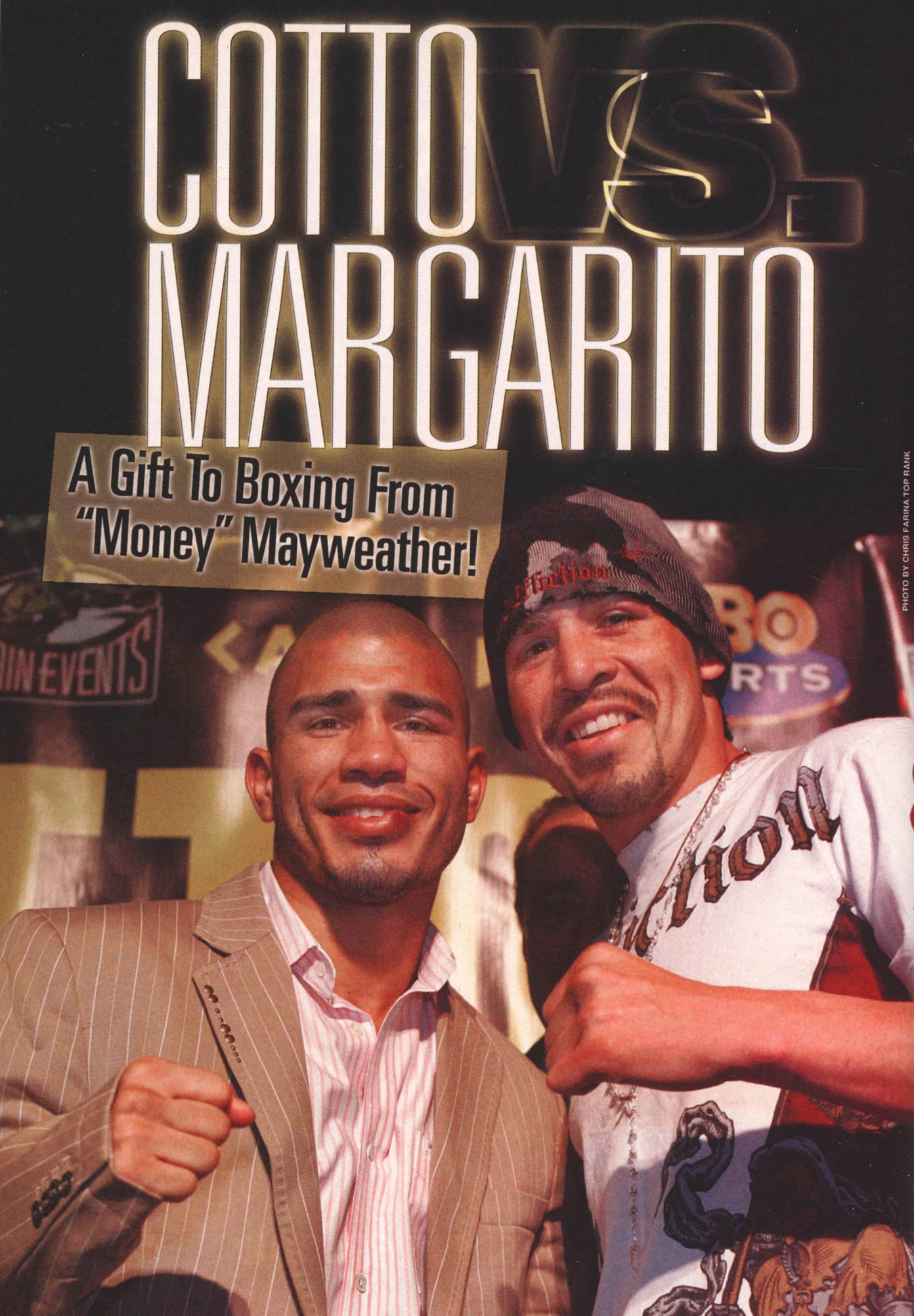

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA TOP RANK

Although some figured that Cintron's recent run of success and his affiliation with Emanuel Steward would make a difference in his rematch with Margarito, it did not. "The Tijuana Tornado" ripped Cintron apart again and handed him a savage beating.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

By Eric Raskin

If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, well, you know the rest. In boxing, though, identifying a duck is never that simple.

Ever since Floyd Mayweather entered the welterweight division, the accusations have flown his way regarding various challenges he's waddled away from. For a while it was Antonio Margarito whom Mayweather was "ducking," as "Pretty Boy" turned down an $8-million offer to fight the Mexican. Lately, it's been Miguel Cotto's fans using the "D" word, since the Puerto Rican has all but cleaned out the division in establishing himself as the top contender to the lineal title held by Mayweather, only to see "Money" chase dollar signs instead of letting Cotto chase him around the ring.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

The popular and game Gomez was like a lamb to the slaughter, and Cotto dismantled him with a highly proficient attack to the head and body to maintain his position as the number-one contender and the biggest threat to world champion Floyd Mayweather.

The question is this: Is Mayweather spinelessly ducking his toughest challenges? Or is he using that thing right above his spine and showing his marketing brilliance in letting Cotto and Margarito build themselves up into bigger attractions? That's a debate that will go on until Mayweather fights one of them.

But in the meantime, we have Cotto and Margarito set to fight each other on July 26, and regarding that showdown, there is no debate: This is a matchup that screams Fight of the Year, and we have Mayweather and either his cowardice or his genius to thank for it.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

The expression on Gomez' face says it all, as Cotto drives a left into the pit of his stomach. Virtually everybody outside of Gomez' camp pegged this as a mismatch, and that's exactly what it was, a well-paid tuneup for the undefeated Puerto Rican, who is now unbeaten in 32 pro bouts.

While Mayweather's actions make such nicknames as "Donald Duck" (for his Trump-like obsession with money) or "Daffy Duck" (for his involvement with such silly and trivial pursuits as pro wrestling) arguably applicable, Cotto and Margarito's mutual eagerness to face each other shows that for some fighters, ducking simply isn't an option. In his first 12 months at 147 pounds, Cotto defeated Carlos Quintana, Zab Judah, and Shane Mosley, three men still ranked among THE RING'S top six contenders in boxing's deepest division, even after losing to Cotto. Margarito's resume glitters a bit less, but in going 3-1 against Paul Williams, Kermit Cintron, and Joshua Clottey—three dangerous

welterweights who've also claimed at one time or another to be the victim of ducking—he's shown fearlessness of the highest order.

After Cotto and Margarito cleared a pair of hurdles at Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall of April 12, knocking out Alfonso Gomez and Cintron, respectively, both accepted each other's challenge with the nonchalance we've come to expect from them.

"Cotto's one of the best welterweights," Margarito said in the ring after his sixth-round knockout of Cintron. "We'll leave it up to [promoter] Bob Arum to see it whenever Cotto's ready."

"I'm ready for the guy who my company puts in front of me," Cotto agreed after an easy five-round win over Gomez. "If it's Margarito in July, I'm ready for him."

The postfight press conference quickly turned into a prefight press conference, Cotto vs. Margarito becoming all but official as the two victors posed for pictures together. In truth, they had an agreement in place before the shared card in April (Cotto and Cintron also had an agreement in case

Kermit's Kryptonite

When Antonio Margarito bludgeoned Kermit Cintron in 2005, scoring four knockdowns on his way to a fifth-round stoppage, it seemed like the sort of lopsided fight that would never logically lend itself to a rematch. Just three years later, momentum overruled logic long enough to make the fight again. But the logical favorite—Margarito—went ahead and prevailed in a fight that was no different than the first meeting, except it lasted one round longer and featured fewer knockdowns.

The first round was close, but in the second the same factors that proved Cintron's undoing the first time began to surface. Cintron, 146½, Reading, Pennsylvania, via Carolina, Puerto Rico, didn't have the defensive wherewithal to avoid the heavy punches of Margarito, 146½, Tijuana, Mexico, and on the inside, Margarito had him badly outclassed. The Mexican seemed to hurt Cintron, 28, midway through the round with a bodyshot, and the defending IBF welterweight titlist's only bright moment in the one-sided round came when Margarito suffered a small cut.

In the fifth round, Cintron, who was making his third title defense, suffered a cut of his own on the corner of his right eye. He had been cut in the same spot in the first fight with Margarito and had lost confidence from that point forward. Again in the rematch, the bleeding ushered in the beginning of the end. Before long, Cintron was complaining of rabbit punches (which were mostly the result of his leaning forward) and looking like a beaten man.

In round six, Margarito finished the job with a crushing left hand to the body along the ropes, driving the wind out of Cintron and dropping him to the canvas in pain. Cintron, 29-2 (27), couldn't beat the count of referee Earl Brown (USA), and the entertaining but non-competitive fight reached its conclusion at 1:57 of the sixth.

"We know he's a great puncher," Margarito, 36-5 (26) with 1 no-contest, said of Cintron afterward, "but we know after the second round he slows down a bit. I had excellent preparation, and that's why I came in confident that I would get the knockout again."

That, and the fact that Cintron can't handle a fighter as rangy as Margarito who can absorb his power and won't back down. Cintron may resurrect his career again after this devastating loss, but there certainly will never be a good excuse for making Margarito-Cintron III.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(4-12-08)
—E.R.

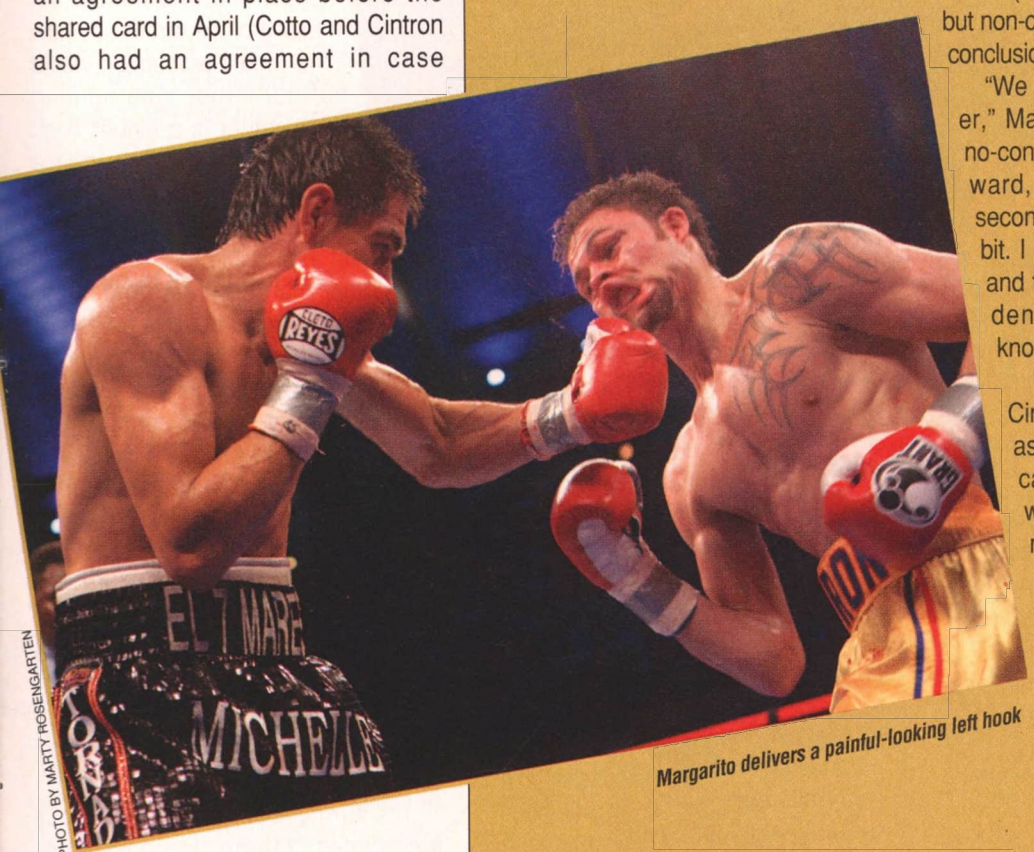

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Margarito delivers a painful-looking left hook

Reality Catches Up With The Reality Star

Everybody knew what Miguel Cotto's fourth defense of the WBA welterweight title, against *The Contender* Season One star Alfonso Gomez, was: a well-earned walkover for Cotto after a demanding 2007 campaign, and an irresistible payday for Gomez in exchange for taking a few rounds of punishment. That 9,427 fans showed up at Boardwalk Hall for the mismatch was either a testament to Cotto's ever-increasing drawing power or to the appeal of the Margarito-Cintron II co-feature. Either way, those fans didn't get much of a fight in the main event, but they did get to see a pound-for-pounder show off his whole arsenal in an exceptionally loose and confident performance.

Cotto, 146½, Caguas, Puerto Rico, came right out bouncing on his toes and jabbing, and the gulf in skill between the combatants was immediately apparent. Cotto's jab was as stiff and thudding as they come in round two, but it wasn't a jab—or any other punch really—that led Cotto to a 10-8 round. An off-balance Gomez went down late in the round while avoiding a Cotto punch, and referee Randy Neumann (USA) mistakenly called it a knockdown.

More knockdowns would follow, though, and they were quite legit. Gomez, 147, Whittier, California, via Guadalajara, Mexico, was taking a steady beating in the third when one of Cotto's trademark left hooks landed in the pit of the underdog's stomach, dropping him for a six-count with five seconds left in the round.

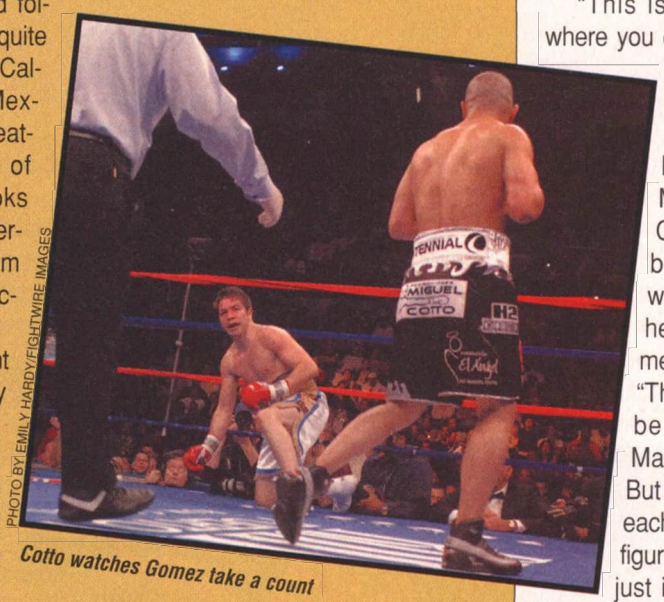

PHOTO BY EMILY HARDY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
Cotto watches Gomez take a count

In the fourth, Gomez' right eye was swelling, mostly from Cotto's powerful jab. According to CompuBox, Cotto landed an absurd 60 of 94 punches in the round, which could easily have been scored 10-8 even without a knockdown. Round five was definitely a 10-8 stanza, thanks to a stiff jab dropping Gomez, 18-4-2 (8), with a minute left on the clock. Though the fighters were born just one day apart in 1980, they looked worlds apart in the ring on this night, and Neumann, on the advice of the ringside physician, mercifully stopped the bout between the fifth and sixth rounds.

"I try to do everything in the fight, move, punch, put pressure," said Cotto, 32-0 (26), in his improving but not quite perfect English. "I think that my jab in the last three fights, that was the difference, make me fight better, make me a better boxer than them. Gomez put pressure on me, I put pressure on Gomez, I boxed a little bit, I can do more than one thing."

And all of the things he does, he does darned well, unfortunately for the overmatched Gomez.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(4-12-08)
—E.R.

Margarito ended up on the losing end), and all that remained as of press time was to sign off on some of the fine print and find a venue. Early on, the fight was rumored to be headed for Yankee Stadium, the first boxing match there in more than 30 years and the final one before the demolition of the legendary ballpark. Unfortunately, those rumors have been replaced with talk of a less distinctive venue, such as a Las Vegas casino.

But Cotto-Margarito could be held in a high school gym or in the lobby of Top Rank's offices and it wouldn't matter. This is a pairing of action fighters where all anyone will care about once the bell rings is what happens in those 400-or-so square feet inside the ropes.

"This is one of those matchups where you can't miss, where you know you're going to see something sensational. This is Gatti-Ward, this is Barrera-Morales, this is Vazquez-Marquez, this is Corrales-Castillo," gushed HBO blow-by-blow man Jim Lampley, who called the April double-header and who will call the meeting of the winners in July. "The media perception would be that either man fighting Mayweather is a bigger fight. But for these two guys to face each other is one of those pre-figured style situations where it's just impossible to imagine anything other than mayhem. And at the end of the day, what the fight grosses is academic to me. People ask me, 'What's your favorite fight that you ever called?' and my answer certainly has nothing to do with whether it generated 2.4 million pay-per-view buys. It has only to do with what I saw with my own two eyes.

"There are quite a number of fights where you sit there and say to yourself, *How in the world do human beings do this?* And this is one of those fights where I fully expect in advance that I'll be having that thought process at some point."

It's funny how things work out sometimes. Margarito could have

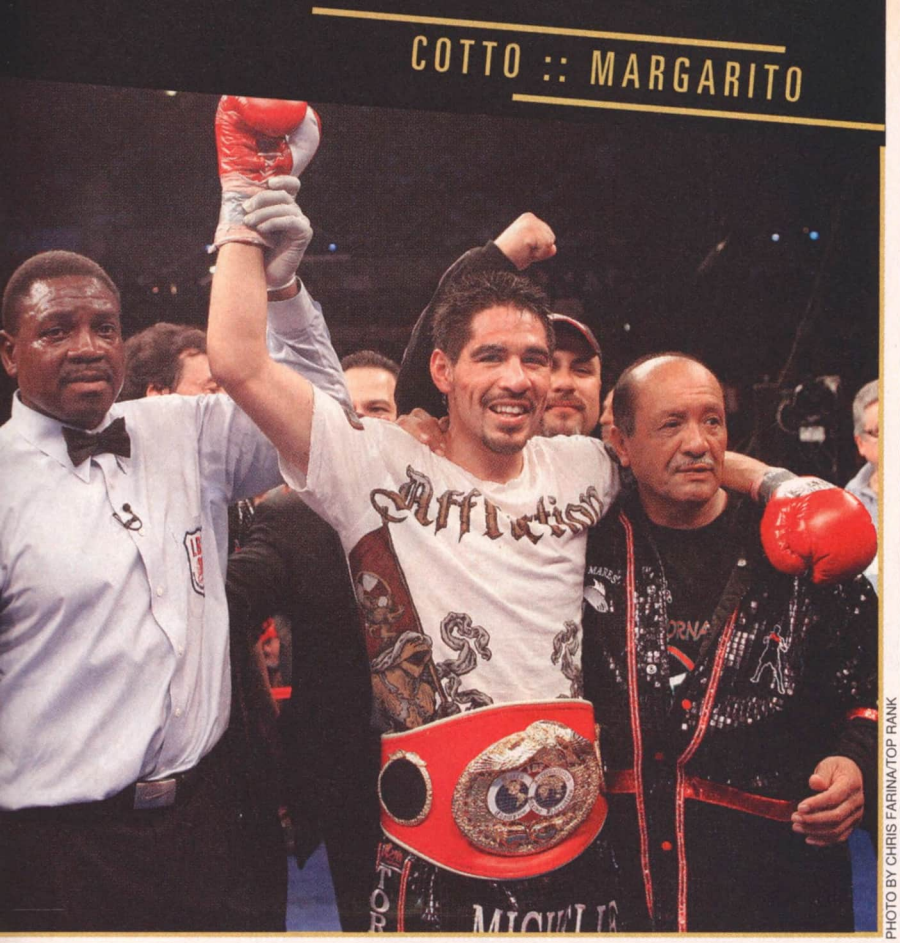

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Referee Earl Brown raises Margarito's arm following his bodyshot kayo of Cintron. The Mexican has bounced back well from his close decision loss to Paul Williams and is perfectly positioned for his upcoming showdown with Cotto on July 26.

fought Cotto last summer, but he opted to fight Williams instead (we'd say he "ducked" Cotto, but how can you call it ducking when you willingly take on an undefeated 6'1" southpaw?), lost a close decision, and here we are a year later and Cotto-Margarito is far hotter than it would have been in '07. In part, it's hotter because the 30-year-old Margarito has scored two demolitions since the Williams fight, an academic first-round blowout of Golden Johnson on the Cotto-Mosley undercard and then the win over Cintron, a vicious puncher whose only two defeats have come at the hands of Margarito.

But mostly, it's hotter because of what Cotto has done in the last 12 months. He knocked out Judah before a raucous Madison Square Garden crowd in a Fight of the Year contender. He showed his versatility in outboxing future Hall of Famer Mosley. Then Quintana, whom Cotto destroyed in five rounds in December '06, upset Williams, making Cotto's win over his countryman that much more meaningful. And though the Gomez fight was almost as much of a mismatch as Margarito-Johnson, it featured another eye-opening display of skill and power by the 27-year-old Puerto Rican, the perfect "how do you pick against either of these guys?" counterpart to Margarito's win over Cintron in the same ring.

"Cotto's maybe the most all-around talented fighter in the welterweight division," observed Cintron's trainer, Emanuel Steward. "But when you have a guy that can take a punch like Margarito, and a physically big guy at 5'11", that's going to be a tough, tough fight. Cotto has the edge in skill, but it's going to be a hell of a fight."

And it's happening thanks to Mayweather, who, since winning the world welterweight title, took a non-title fight for ridiculous money against junior middleweight Oscar De La Hoya (can't fault Pretty Boy for that one), took on junior

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welter champ Ricky Hatton for only slightly less ridiculous money (can't hold that one against him either), and is now in the midst of a nine-month boxing sabbatical while he rests up for a September rematch with De La Hoya. Hardcore fans are alternately yawning and whining over that businessperson's special, and they're doubly livid over rumors of Mayweather wanting a rematch with Hatton—whom he kayoed convincingly last December—after that. But is such down-the-road talk just more of Mayweather's master plan to make it look like he's ducking Cotto and make the fans beat the drum that much louder as the anticipation builds and builds?

It's certainly had that effect on Arum, who used to promote Mayweather and who promotes the two men breathing down his neck.

"Top Rank fighters fight. Antonio and Miguel are Top Rank fighters. No nonsense, they come to fight," Arum said after the April 12 doubleheader. "No Mickey Mouse, no *24/7s*, no dropping F-bombs, but real, honest, working fighters."

Ironically, if Mayweather caved to that trash talk and agreed to fight either Cotto or Margarito instead of De La Hoya, then we wouldn't be getting Cotto vs. Margarito. And some might suggest that Cotto-Margarito, already a phenomenal fight fans' fight, becomes more of a mainstream event because of the way Mayweather, and the undeniable pressure for him to fight the winner, looms over it.

"You can't begin a sentence about Margarito and Cotto without at some point mixing in the subjunctive clause, and Floyd is the subjunctive clause in the fight," Lampley said. "I think we all know that whoever wins, one of the first questions he'll be asked in the ring after the fight is, 'Are you going to call Floyd tomorrow?' Particularly if it's Cotto, because that's where the discussion lies right now anyway. If Cotto can beat a guy like Margarito, who is longer, taller, equally violent, if Cotto can go and do exciting business against him, there's going to be that much more of a reverb, that much more of a rising tide of demand that we get to see it."

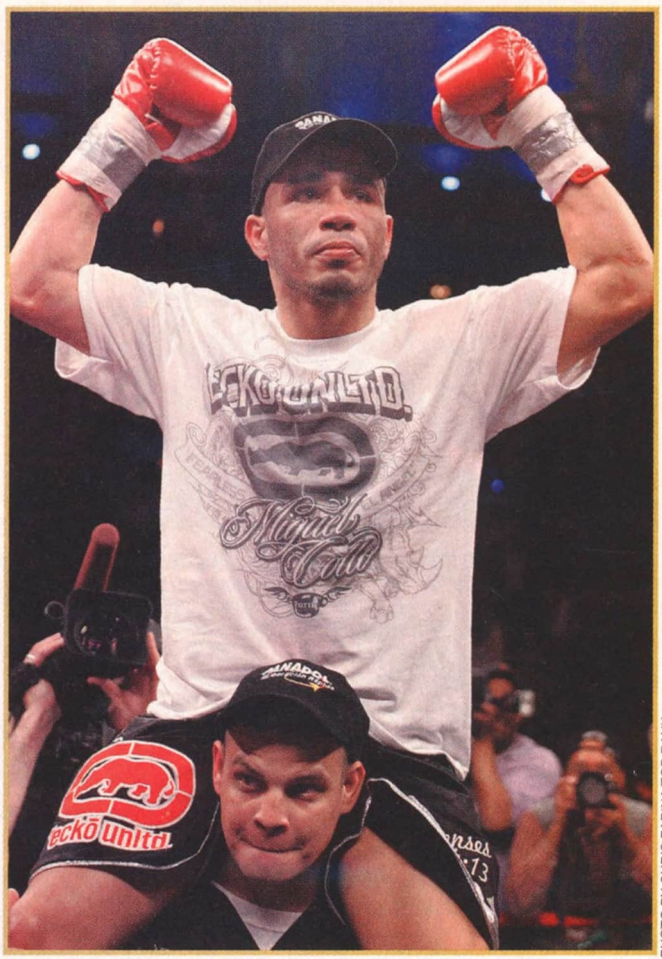

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Riding high: Cotto, already a big drawing card in New York City and his native Puerto Rico, is rapidly catching on in Atlantic City, where more than 9,000 turned out for the Gomez fight.

Lampley went on to compare Mayweather vs. Cotto to two past fights, arguably the best bout of the '80s and the best bout of the '90s. He noted that Cotto is not quite enough of a household name yet to make this fight into the modern-day Ray Leonard vs. Tommy Hearns. More likely, if the fight were happening now, it would be more akin to Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor, a fight that was just as thrilling as Leonard-Hearns but nowhere near as transcendent an event. Perhaps in 2009, if Cotto beats Margarito first and Mayweather defeats De La Hoya again, with Mayweather and Cotto both bringing perfect records into the ring, this welterweight championship showdown would cross over into that Leonard-Hearns realm.

However, by "ducking" Cotto, Mayweather is gambling with the very realistic possibility that Margarito defeats the Puerto Rican. Mayweather vs. a victorious Margarito would be big, but it wouldn't draw any comparisons to Leonard-Hearns. Not to mention, if Cotto-Margarito is the Fight of the Year contender that most of us expect it to be, and if the lesser star wins, then there's likely to be a rematch (and maybe a rubber match) in place of a meeting with the pound-for-pound king.

The question remains, is Mayweather rooting for Cotto, on account of the reigning champ really wanting that fight and simply biding his time to make it bigger? Or is he rooting against Cotto, because he wants no part of a younger, stronger, hungrier bodypunching machine who's becoming more and more difficult for him to ignore?

Ultimately, it doesn't matter who and what scenario Mayweather is rooting for; it's Cotto and Margarito who will determine their fates, the fate of the division, and what Mayweather's options and obligations will be. Mayweather may loom over the fight, but Cotto and Margarito will be the stars on July 26. They're guaranteed to give us the sort of blood-and-guts action fight Mayweather has always done his best to stay out of.

And it wouldn't be happening without the moneymaking mindset—be that a compliment or an insult—of Mayweather. ■

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DAWSON -JOHNSON... TARVËR -WOODS

THE LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT CARD THAT SOLVED NOTHING

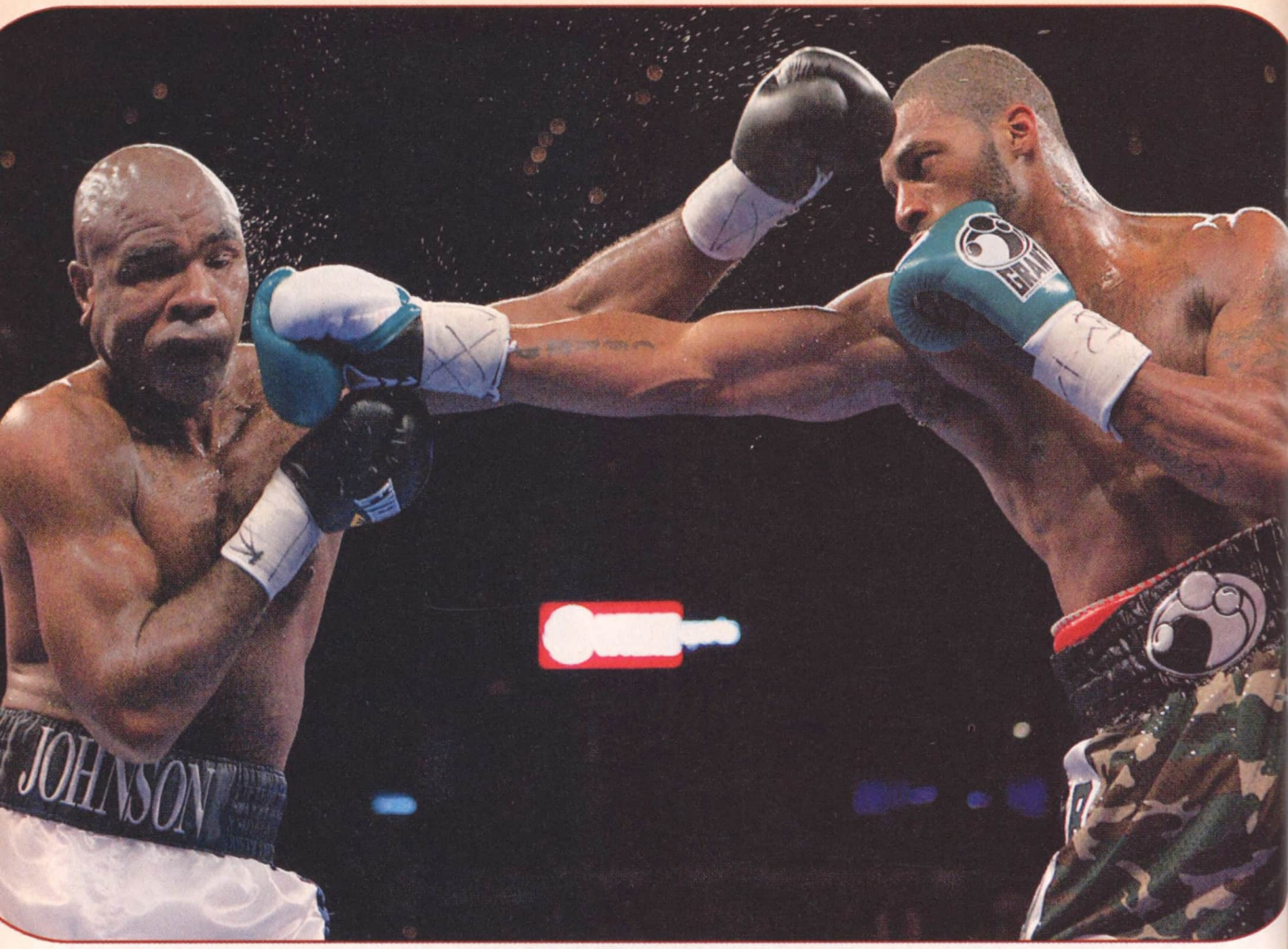
Although there was no controversy when Tarver cruised to a one-sided decision over Woods to take the IBF belt (opposite page), many thought that Johnson was robbed when defending WBC titleholder Dawson, pictured on the receiving end of a right to the chin (above), was given a unanimous decision.

By William Dettloff

PHOTOS BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

When they threw Antonio Tarver, Clinton Woods, Chad Dawson, and Glen Johnson in a ring on April 12—in effect, all together at the same time—it was done with a singular hope: that by the end, two or maybe even three of them would be eliminated from future discussions as to who would be the eventual ruler of the 175-pound weight class. And, as so often happens when events are manufactured with a preferred outcome in mind, things did not go as planned. The only one eliminated was Woods, who more or less eliminated himself, but from whom nothing big was realistically expected anyway.

"I fought the best light heavyweight in the world," Woods said after losing a one-sided and apathetic decision to Tarver. "I'm just a skinny kid from Sheffield. I never dreamed of nights like this. I'm happy with my career."



Dawson boxed well at long range in a number of rounds, but could never back up Johnson or stop his steady march forward. Moreover, his late fade against his 39-year-old challenger has cast doubt on whether or not he is the future of the light heavyweight division.

His charming honesty aside, Woods' assertion that Tarver is the world's best light heavyweight is one of several debatable assessments that arose from a night whose stated goal was to answer questions, not create new ones. For Woods, at least, the night's events accomplished that mission. His important questions answered, for now, he can go and do with his life whatever it is that skinny kids from Sheffield do. For everyone else involved, especially us, there is only more uncomfortable haze where there was supposed to be clarity.

It is one of the many peculiarities of the human condition, and probably a necessary one, that of some of life's larger questions we demand a crackling transparency, while in reply to others we are contented enough by a soft, kindly ambiguity. Probably that has to do with the relative unpleasantness of the expected reply. The more likely it is to cause discomfort, the more accepting we are of answers that are fuzzy, unverifiable, based on fantasy, or completely contradictory to what we know in our hearts to be a depressing truth.

The bigger questions one can ask concerning the fight game (and most other things too) are myriad and, after a while, posed with the expectation that the answer forthcoming is at the very least a half-truth, and in most cases a complete fabrication. That's not as bad as it sounds. Most of us couldn't get through even a single day if forced to confront the whole truth head-on, so it is mostly with a self-satisfied embrace that we greet the repeated falsities in whose proven validity we place our faith.

But if there is any field in which we demand clarity, it is in the construction and ordering of the fight game's players. In what is probably a relic from our prehistoric beginnings, we have an innate and visceral need to know who among us is the strongest, the toughest, the surest of foot. That's largely what all this "champion" business is about. Despite the insipid and ignorant notion propagated by some in the boxing media that the identity of a champion is mostly irrelevant because fans just want to see good fights, the human tendency to know who is who persists. That is the case even in this business that, more than most, exists on contrivances that serve as a kind of foreplay designed to lead eventually to a big, splashy event you'll recognize as a "superfight" or a "unification match."

All of which brings us, rather messily it is conceded, back to the light heavyweight free-for-all that occurred in Tampa, Florida, and whose sole purpose it was to provide us the clarity

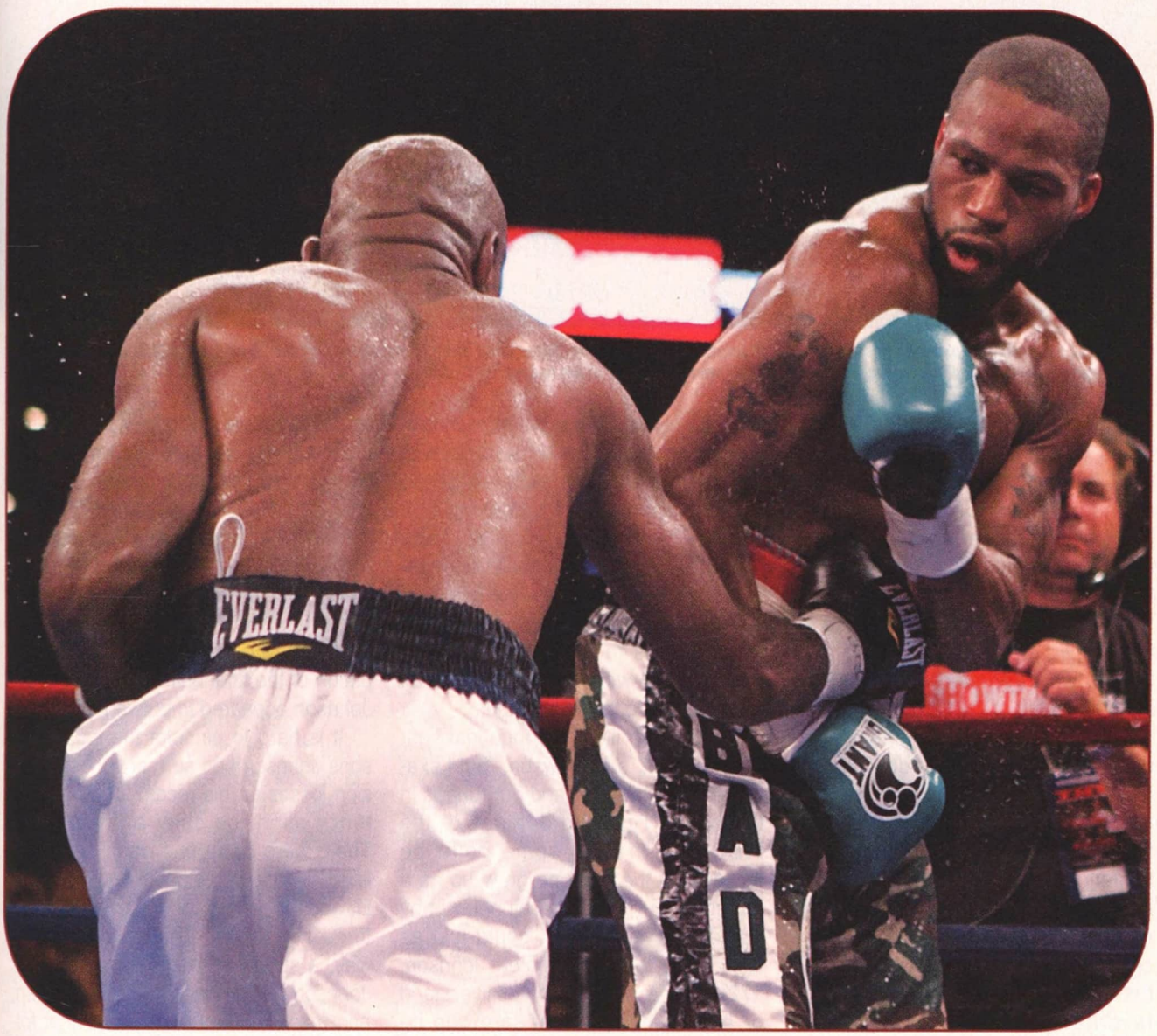
and forthright direction we like so much to see. The outcome we expected, and which was proffered by the many writers and media types in attendance in the days and weeks prior, was that Dawson would emerge as the light heavyweight division's future king.

Dawson went into it possessing many of the requisites: good skills, undefeated record, at just 25 years old possessor of rare youth in a field of gray beards. He only had to dispose of Johnson, whose legendary but presumably faded durability certainly would be no match for Dawson's youth and exuberance.

The appointment of someone to the post at the top of the heap was of great importance, seeing as how a mere week later Bernard Hopkins, the division's 43-year-old champion, would lose the title to Joe Calzaghe, his 36-year-old challenger. It could be reasonably expected that Calzaghe doesn't hang around much longer. After the fight, Calzaghe was noncommittal whether he'd stay at 175, go back down to 168, or perhaps fight at both weights.

It is unfortunate for Dawson, and in some respects, for us too, that Johnson isn't as ready to embrace the quiet to which Hopkins and Calzaghe look, even at his advanced age of 39. If he had been, all of us would already be at the satisfied conclusion that Dawson is indeed the division's future star. Then we'd be free to focus our happy analyses only on who might come and bump him off. As it stands now, he might already have been bumped. His decision win over Johnson, by the unreasonably wide scores of 116-112 (three times) set off not only Johnson afterward, but the crowd and some of the media as well (THE RING scored it 115-115). For the record, the official judges were Nicolas Hidalgo, Jack Woodburn, and Peter Trematerra.

"He's a good fighter, but he's not good enough to beat me!" Johnson fairly screamed at Showtime's Karen Bryant, whose unenviable task it was to try to appear calm in the face of Johnson's emotional postfight tirade. "I



Johnson finds a hole in Dawson's defense and digs a right to the body. Pressure is the transplanted Jamaican's game and he took the fight to the younger man from first bell to the last—and was clearly the fresher of the two at the end.

Woods was unexpectedly meek against Tarver, which allowed the veteran southpaw to do pretty much as he pleased. It was difficult to discern whether Tarver was much improved over recent outings or Woods was simply out of his league.

cannot believe that at age 39, they would rip me off like this. Of course I want a rematch!" We're not sure why Johnson thinks his age precludes judges from rendering questionable decisions against him (see George Foreman-Shannon Briggs), but he certainly must have been encouraged by the crowd at the St. Pete Times Forum, which erupted in boos at the announcement of the verdict.

Often you can't go by crowd reaction—prizefights seen from ringside necessarily and by design evoke emotional responses in spectators, reactions that as a result often can't be trusted. If a fighter wins the first seven rounds of a 10-round fight, but has to run for his life in the last three, the crowd will boo the decision that goes his way—especially if he is the favorite. But there was legitimate cause to protest here.

It's true that Dawson, 26-0 (17) with 1 no-contest, was the better technical boxer and spent fairly large portions of the fight banging hard shots to Johnson's body and outboxing him from the outside. Dawson, 173½, even tried the impossible on occasion—getting Johnson to back up. He failed, of course, but was effective enough in many rounds to keep Johnson from getting good work done, which is all you need to do to win any fight.

"It was definitely the toughest fight of my career," said Dawson. "But I executed my game plan and put rounds in the bank." His third defense of the WBC title may at some point be recalled as the night he grew up as a professional fighter, and all noteworthy fighters have those. It could just as likely be recalled as the night Johnson, 172¾, made his last impressive stand or as the most blatant screwing he took in a long career full of them.

Johnson, 47-12-2 (32), was as tireless as ever, as stubborn as ever, and, on the three occasions that anyone was hurt in the fight, it was Dawson and not he. Right hands rocked Dawson in the third, seventh, and 10th rounds, and many unofficial judges gave Johnson the last four rounds of the fight. In the end, it was Dawson, not Johnson, who was holding on in anticipation of the final bell. In many rounds, Johnson appeared to outwork his rival.

It is hard to pinpoint the exact reasons Johnson has so many close decision losses on his record, but inconsistency might be chief among them. There were occasions when he simply lifted his foot off the pedal and permitted Dawson to regain control, even if he did frequently reclaim it again later. Either way, a strong case could be made for Johnson having deserved the decision, and many made it in the days that followed, none louder than Johnson himself. They will prove to have been for

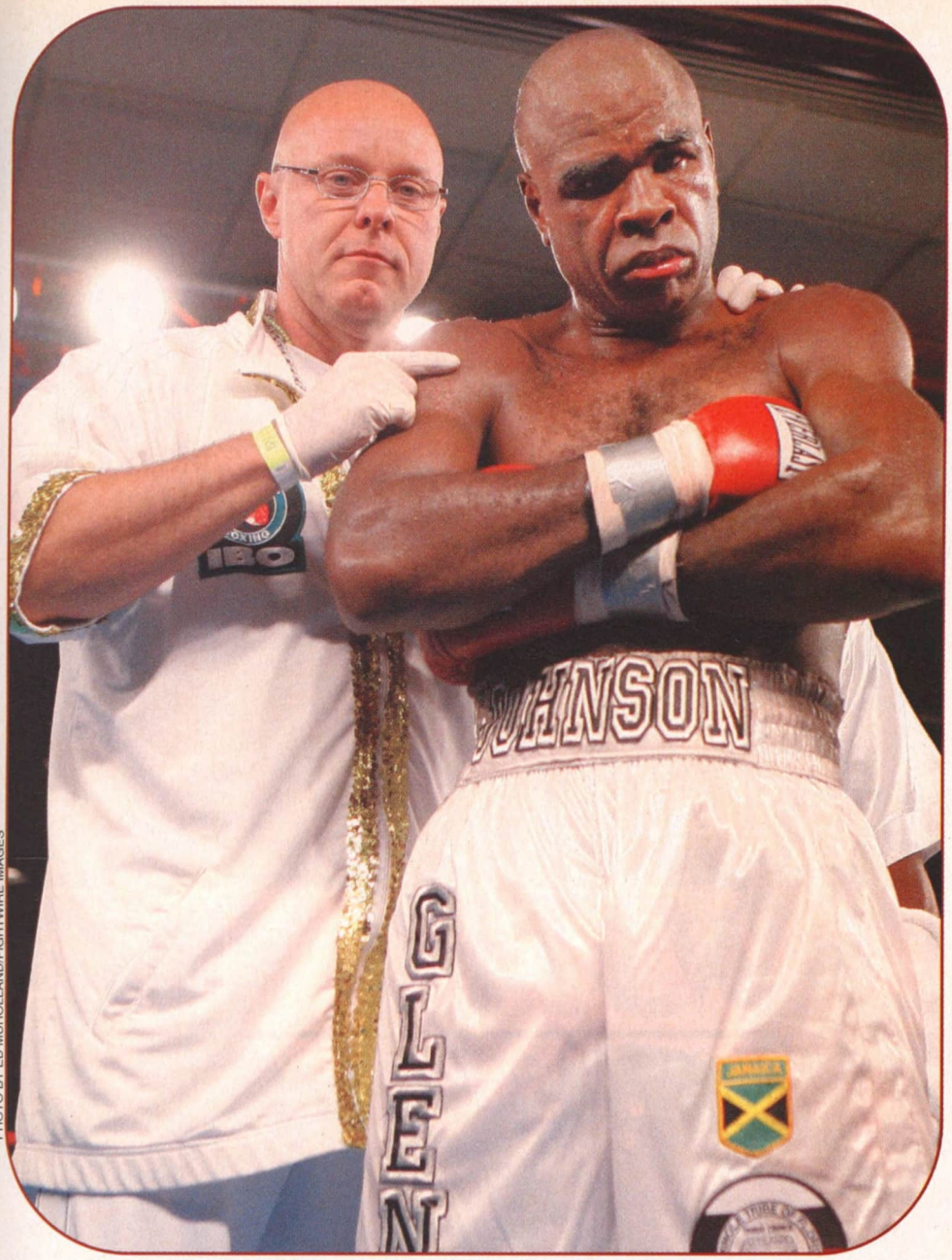


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Johnson (with trainer Orlando Cueller) strikes a menacing pose, following his TKO of Hugo Pineda in January 2008. "The Road Warrior" has lost numerous controversial decisions during his career, but none hurt as badly as the call that went against him in the Dawson fight.

naught; he will not get a rematch.

In keeping with the night's theme, Tarver's win over Woods, by scores of 116-112, 117-111, and 119-109, did little to elevate Tarver or to disqualify him. Either would have been preferable. Woods, 175, offered so little resistance, so readily handed over the IBF title he'd defended four times—once against Johnson—that it appeared a strong possibility that Tarver's prefight trash talk intimidated him into keeping his hands to himself. The result was that Tarver, 173¾, looked better than he has in a long while, but we don't know if that was a consequence of Woods' mediocrity, or, as Tarver would prefer us to believe, the unlikely happenstance that he has found himself again at 39 years old.

"It's all about the belts. I'm looking for all the beltholders," Tarver said. "He was a tough, gritty fighter, but I came into this in great shape. I took some and got some, but the best man won. I'm not surprised by anything that went on in there."

Tarver did mostly as he pleased, keeping Woods at the end of that endless southpaw jab and out-maneuvering him at every turn. Woods, 35, simply couldn't keep up and never appeared inclined to take the kind of chances he'd have to take to get into the fight. That Tarver, 27-4 (19), fought in his hometown couldn't have been a help to Woods, 41-4-1 (24). But as it turned out, it might not have helped Woods had they gone about it in his childhood home in Sheffield. Tarver was simply better, and that odd occurrence, when coupled with Dawson's struggles with Johnson, conspire to cloud things ahead of a proposed match between the two down the road.

It wasn't supposed to be that way. While it's true that a secondary intent to all this was to set up a bout between Dawson and Tarver for the top spot vacated by Hopkins, it was supposed to be for show only. Nobody that's witnessed Tarver's steady decline over the last couple of years—caused or not by the rapid weight loss that occurred after his short-lived Hollywood career—would have expected him to be especially competitive with Dawson, at least the Dawson that was supposed to have eliminated Johnson from the running. No one wants to see a 40-year-old as the future of a division. But as Tarver said after beating Woods, "Chad Dawson would be easy pickings now. He's not the fighter now that he was before his fight. He's a wounded duck."

So too as a result are we, who prefer our questions be answered with truth and precision, at least some of the time. But it is no great hardship for us to wait for things to be sorted out at 175. Clarity is always worth waiting for, even if by the end what it reveals is rarely what you'd hoped. ■

AT HOME WITH MANNY PACQUIAO

Get To Know The Pac-Man You Never Knew Before

Text & Photos By Ted Lerner

Two weeks after narrowly defeating Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas to win THE RING's vacant junior lightweight world championship, Manny Pacquiao is seemingly everywhere at once. He's soaking up the cheers at parades in various cities throughout the Philippines, having dinner with President Gloria Arroyo, being inducted into the Elorde Boxing Hall of Fame. He appears on a handful of TV shows, is spotted at an army base playing basketball with some generals, then in military fatigues co-piloting a helicopter down to the war-torn southern island of Jolo, where he personally pumps up the troops. Constantly followed by adoring fans and an army of media, Pacquiao is everything to every Filipino—Superman slaying the bad guy, Elvis driving the masses wild, the Pope offering his blessings.

But on the day THE RING joined him and his traveling entourage, Pacquiao is just a local boy returning home. After

Pacquiao flashes the peace sign upon his return to the Philippines following his victory over Juan Manuel Marquez (opposite). But after all the parades and celebrations are over, the champ and his wife, Jinkee (in light blue shirt), return to his hometown of General Santos City on the southern island of Mindanao, where he resides in opulent splendor (above).

PHOTO BY JES AZNAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Naturally, Pacquiao has a boxing glove shaped swimming pool in his backyard

flying south from Cebu, where the city threw a parade in his honor, the Air Philippines jet carrying Pacquiao banks over the wide, blue expanse of Sarangani Bay and touches down in the searing-hot southern Philippine city of General Santos, the hometown of the most famous Filipino athlete of all-time.

As Pacquiao and his wife, Jinkee, emerge from the terminal and walk toward his bulletproof Chevy Tahoe SUV, people jockey to see him and several run over to snap a photo on their cell phone and shake his hand. Police and a scrum of bodyguards, some with Armalite machine guns and .45 caliber pistols, watch as Pacquiao accommodates everyone. After 10 minutes, Pacquiao jumps into the Tahoe, followed by several bodyguards and police. The rest of us climb aboard the other vehicles, and the three-car convoy speeds out of the airport.

The SUVs race through the bustling, dusty streets of this city of half a million people, the very streets where Pacquiao roamed as a poor youth, selling bread and ice cream to earn a few pesos to help his struggling family. After 20 minutes, the procession passes through the iron gates of the house everyone calls "The Mansion."

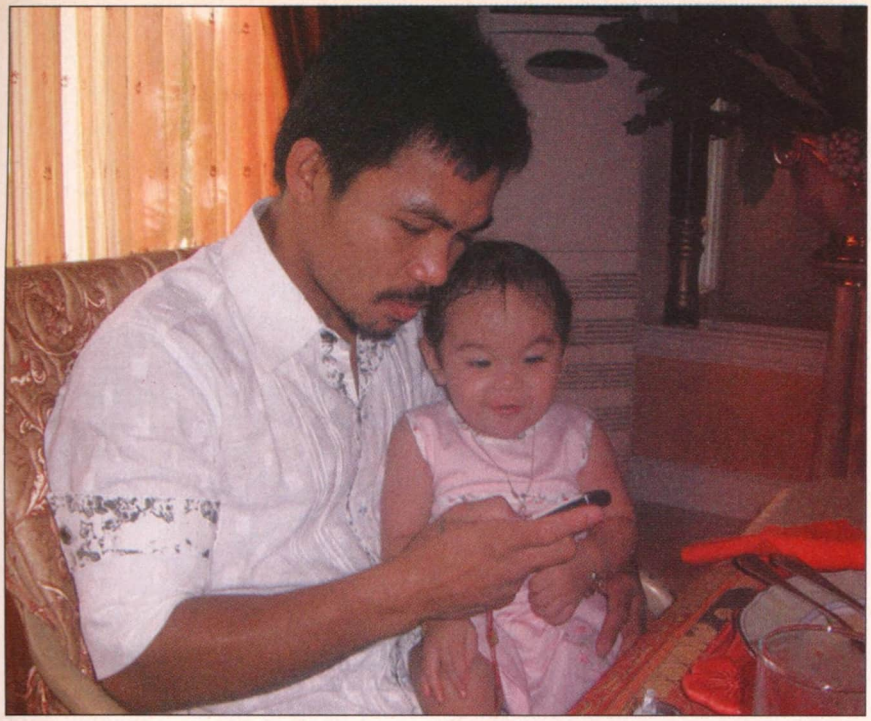
Pacquiao grew up on the other side of General Santos City and lived there until he moved into this newly built house a year-and-a-half ago. The Mansion's compound consists of two large buildings, surrounded by an 8-foot high wall. In the middle sits a swimming pool shaped like a boxing glove. The main house has six bedrooms. An entirely separate house with quarters for his security guards, and billiards and music rooms, rises in the back. This is also where he keeps his seven SUVs, a Toyota pickup truck, and 25 motorcycles.

Several people who had been waiting on the back veranda greet Manny and Jinky. A nanny delivers their 15-month-old daughter, Mary Divine Grace, into Pacquiao's arms, bringing a huge smile to his face.

Several minutes later, Pacquiao walks into the stunningly gorgeous living room, heads for the long dining table, and invites his guests to sit for lunch. Servants deliver a massive spread, including several versions of General Santos' most famous dish, tuna. In Gen San (as the locals call it), fresh tuna is served with every meal. Before everybody digs in, Manny bows his head and quietly recites a prayer.

Even sitting next to Pacquiao at lunch, private conversation is not easy. Everyone seeks his attention, and various assistants continually deliver folders or papers with important notes on them for him to consider. Pacquiao's cell phone is constantly ringing with incoming text messages and phone calls. When a call comes in, the ring tone is Manny singing a song from his CD. What he really loves, however, is when a text message arrives. The current alert tone on his phone, played at peak volume, is a recording of Michael

Just part of the fleet of vehicles Pacquiao keeps at "The Mansion"



Pacquiao is reunited with his daughter, Mary Divine Grace, who seems just as fascinated with the mobile phone as her father

Buffer announcing the scores and the winner of the recent Marquez fight.

" ... the winner and NEW champion, from the Philippines ..." When this happens, Pacquiao's bright eyes and wide smile say more than any word could convey. It is obvious that he loves every minute of his life.

Between bites, Pacquiao talks about the Marquez fight and the criticisms he received from the local media, some of whom suggested that he was lucky to get the decision. Actually, his beef with the media started during training, when some local writers gleefully (and falsely) reported that he was overweight just three weeks before the fight.

Pacquiao calls the negative reporting about him "crab mentality," and also has an answer for fans wondering what happened to the animalistic ball of fury they fell in love with, the one who has been absent in recent fights.

"It depends on who is my opponent," he says. "Marquez is a good fighter, and he's a counterpuncher. It's hard to be that aggressive with a counterpuncher. And Barerra doesn't want to fight; he's always running. When I fight David Diaz, they will see the old Pacquiao."

After the meal, Pacquiao sits down at his Yamaha grand piano and plays a soulful version of "Let It Be," singing along while his daughter runs around at his feet. As the junior lightweight champion quietly plays and sings, the difference between the public Pacquiao and the private Pacquiao couldn't be more striking. Even though he is known to be outgoing and playful, in this setting he seems quiet, serious, and rather introspective.

When he's at home, Pacquiao's staff numbers nearly 50 people. He has a full-time personal assistant, a handful of maids who cook and clean, several gardeners, and a nanny to look after his daughter. Then there are various family members and relatives who come and go. The biggest eye-opener, however, is the overt security presence. Twenty-eight armed bodyguards and drivers watch the champ wherever he goes. Although General Santos has been mostly spared from the pockets of Muslim and Communist rebellion taking place in some locales in Mindanao, the city suffered two bombings in 2007, which killed 20 people. Still, Pacquiao's people all say the city is safe and that they are just being careful.

"It's just a precaution," says Carlos Homo, a retired army officer who serves as Pacquiao's chief of security. "He has no enemies. There are no threats to his life. Manny is a very good guy. But so many people want to hug him, meet him. We just have to be prepared and be careful."

According to the security guard watching the front gate, there's a steady stream of visitors, including congressmen, senators, mayors, and plenty of ordinary folk, who line up

A small army of gun-toting security guards protects Pacquiao and his family

Pacquiao gets about 20 letters every day, most of which are from fellow-Filipinos seeking his help

outside his gate hoping their idol will emerge and hand out money and rice, which he has done on many occasions.

At the guard shack, several boxes stuffed with unopened letters sit on the floor. The guard says at least 20 letters arrive every day from all over the Philippines. Most are addressed simply to, "Manny Pacquiao, General Santo City." Virtually all the letters are pleas of help: A tribe in the mountains of a nearby province has lost their land and want Manny to help them get it back. Some local officials from up north need three-dozen T-shirts for their community patrol. A religious group is looking for help to finish a church. A banker in Cebu City wants Manny to open up an account.

A 30-minute ride from The Mansion is Pacquiao's 20-acre farm in the municipality of Malungon. It is a stunningly lush landscape befitting the area's claim to be one of the breadbaskets of the Philippines. Fields of bananas, papayas, asparagus, corn, and pineapples dot the rolling green hills, as the ever-present Mt. Apo, the tallest mountain in the Philippines, gazes down from the distance.

A small sign with the beaming face of "The People's Champ" welcomes visitors to "The Super Pacman Farm," and you officially enter the premises by going under a giant concrete championship belt. Manny bought the farm seven years ago and has steadily improved it, raising nearly 1,000 fighting cocks, along with rows of mango and banana trees. The farm also houses a mini-cockpit, a hatchery, and several cottages.

Accompanied by a dozen caretakers and bird handlers, as well as various friends and bodyguards, Manny strolls the grounds and inspects several roosters, sometimes pitting one against the other. "It's just like boxing," he says when asked what he looks for in a fighting cock. "Speed, power, and counterpunching."

Later, under a row of shade-giving coconut trees, Manny chats and jokes, as a symphony of rooster crows fills the warm, late-afternoon air. A boy climbs one of the trees and hacks down some fresh coconuts. Pacquiao takes three of them and quickly devours the juice and meat. He's obviously enjoying a rare moment to kick back. Even here, though, he is never far from his many business interests and tasks at hand, as evidenced by the constant calls, text messages, and people around him clamoring for his attention.

"I have to do it," Pacquiao says when asked how he keeps it all together. "I have to take advantage of my success. I'm the one in control and I make all the decisions." He speaks with the seriousness of a man who has just suddenly realized the sheer magnitude of his life, a highly charged existence at a level never seen before by any one of his countrymen.

Those around him have observed that Pacquiao, especially in the last few weeks, has completely abandoned his wild ways. According to those close to him, Pacquiao no longer

The entrance to Pacquiao's farm, where he raises fighting cocks and fruit trees

Sparring session, rooster style

attends cockfights, and instead sells the cocks to other people. Moreover, he no longer answers the phone when there's an invitation to wager. On this night, he leaves a case of beer on hand for his guests and decrees that the bodyguards, like him, will no longer drink. When one of his bodyguards absentmindedly grabs a can of beer, Pacquiao takes it away and symbolically washes his own hands with the beer.

So why the sudden life-altering changes?

"He has to get his life together," says Malungon's mayor, Bong Constantino. "He's got a big responsibility. Manny's a very sharp guy. He knows that Filipinos will never love a loser and that he has to prepare for that eventuality."

That means taking every advantage of his wealth and extraordinarily lofty position in Philippine society to slowly piece together all aspects of his future. This is evident later in the night when two more important guests arrive to greet Pacquiao, the governor and vice-governor of Sarangani province, where the farm is located. After dinner, Pacquiao relaxes around the table for another two hours. Despite being amongst the most powerful politicians in the province, he's the obvious center of attention. Everyone sits glued to their chairs as this pugilistic god of the Philippines talks about his future.

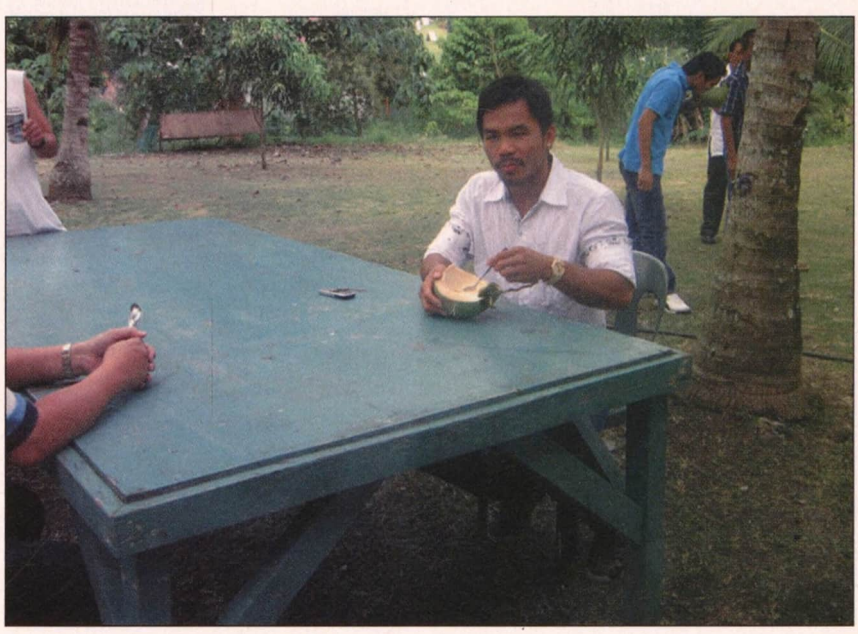
"After Diaz, I want to fight Ricky Hatton," Pacquiao says, flashing his trademark smile. "That will be a good fight." He's also serious about fighting Oscar De La Hoya. "I'm 150 pounds right now," he says. "My sparring partners are always 140 to 150 pounds. It's no problem for me. And I'm not getting any younger. So why not?"

It's been a long day, but there are still several people waiting to see Pacquiao. One is Rolando Navarette, the former WBC super featherweight titleholder, who also hails from General Santos City. Navarette, who has been down on his luck for many years, has come to ask Pacquiao for help. Pacquiao often cites the plight of Navarette as motivation as to how *not* to conduct his own affairs. The two talk for a while, and Pacquiao slips Navarette a few notes. It's just past 10 p.m. when the champ calls it a night.

At 8:45 the next morning, Pacquiao descends his spiral staircase, eats a light breakfast, has a few words with his personal assistant, boards the white Tahoe, and heads off to school. The Notre Dame University of Dadian is only a mile away, but, like everywhere he travels, the two SUV's and the phalanx of armed bodyguards go with him.

Pacquiao quit school after the sixth grade to help out his mother, who was raising six children without a husband. Last year he passed his high school equivalency exam and enrolled in college, where he's taking up a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. Because of his hectic schedule, he made arrangements with the school for special one-on-one lessons when he's in town.

"This course will teach him about organizing a business," said Vice President of Academics Dr. Norma Segocio, "including human resources, basic



There's nothing quite like a fresh coconut

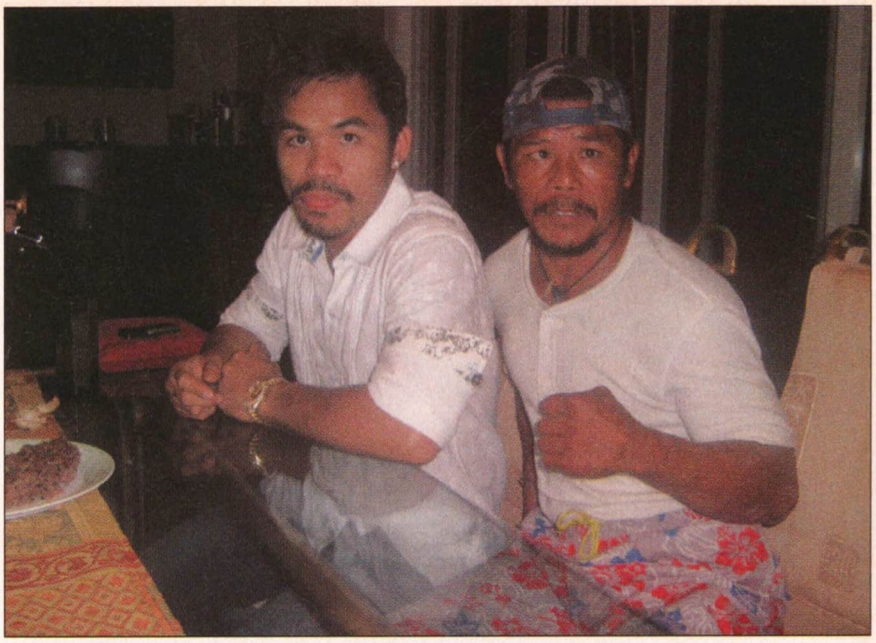
accounting skills, and things like that. He's a very simple person. Money does not affect him. Fame does not affect him. He's a very humble person and he's very happy to learn. He's open to accepting what he doesn't know. One day he's on TV with the president of the Philippines and the next day he's here. It's great."

It appears that Pacquiao is building his empire brick by brick. He owns seven residences in General Santos City, three commercial properties, several homes in swank subdivisions in Manila, and is buying property in various Philippine locales at an impressive clip. On the way home from school for lunch, Pacquiao stops to check on the progress of one of his commercial properties, a two-story building in the heart of the city that will, when finished, be home to a high-end coffee shop and Pacquiao's Knockout Bar.

After lunch, Manny plays the piano for 15 minutes and then goes to the veranda where more visitors await the man they all refer to as "Idol." He's extremely soft-spoken and very polite with everyone he meets.

The parents of a man from Gen San have been waiting for several hours, and have brought a local television news crew. Their son has been jailed in Saudi Arabia and they want Pac-Man to help them. After Pacquiao sits with the parents, he phones the Philippines' justice secretary. Another group is asking for a donation for a training program for local youths. Afterward, Pacquiao takes a phone call and does a quick interview with a reporter in Manila. Then another group of men show up, the father of his personal secretary and members of a local church group.

At 1:55 p.m., the pugilistic godfather quickly cuts things off and heads for his waiting SUV. The two-car convoy zooms out of the driveway and Pacquiao is off to his afternoon session at school.



Pacquiao tries to help those less fortunate than him, including former WBC 130-pound titleholder Rolando Navarette

Most evenings when he's in town, Pacquiao crosses the sprawling city to the neighborhood of his birth and formative years, where he plays basketball with the same guys he grew up with. A crowd of about 200 people awaits their local-boy-made-good, and 10 minutes after the convoy pulls up courtside, Pacquiao emerges from the Tahoe wearing his Pac-Man basketball jersey and shorts.

Pacquiao plays basketball the way he boxes: aggressively. He and his brother, Bobby, play on the same team, and there's only one other guy wearing proper basketball shoes. The rest play in rubber slippers. Grimy, barefoot street kids sit enthralled and clap wildly at every basket made by the hero in their midst.

It's hard to believe that roughly 20 years ago, Pacquiao was just like them: poor, hungry, and hopeful. In miles, it's not far from The Mansion to the old hood, but in terms of lifestyle, they are two totally different universes. If there is a secret to his unique success, it just might be that Pacquiao keeps one foot firmly rooted in both. ■

Ted Lerner is THE RING's Philippines correspondent.

Teacher Sheila Sabula and Pac-Man hard at work

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CARD SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

A pair of 36-year-old lightweights proved superior to their younger opponents when world champion Joel Casamayor turned back the challenge of previously undefeated Michael Katsidis (below) and Nate Campbell upset Juan Diaz (opposite page) to capture a collection of alphabet belts.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR DKP

CASAMAYOR *Vs.* CAMPBELL

It Makes Too Much Sense To Happen

By Don Stradley

Joe "Old Bones" Brown was 35-years-old when he lost the lightweight championship to Carlos Ortiz, but so respected was he at the time that he went into the ring as an 8-5 favorite. The sportswriters of 1962 considered Brown a marvel of nature.

What would they say about current lightweight champion Joel Casamayor? At 36, Casamayor was nearly as crafty as Old Bones himself when he kayoed Australia's Michael Katsidis recently in Cabazon, California. It was a grand fight, probably the best lightweight bout since Diego Corrales and Jose Luis Castillo waged their classic in 2005. In fact, we think Casamayor deserves a new nickname after whipping Katsidis. He currently owns one of the oddest nicknames in boxing: "El Cepillo," which translates to "The Brush" or "Hairbrush." It is a reference to the brushing uppercut he uses to rake an

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

After being floored twice in the first round, Katsidis worked his way back into the fight, and in the sixth round knocked Casamayor out of the ring and onto the apron with a barrage of blows. But the cagey champion climbed back into the ring in time to beat the count.

opponent's face. If he keeps fighting the way he did against Katsidis, he should be called something like "Papa Malo" or "El Viejo Mongoose."

Casamayor was expected to be a prominent figure in the professional ranks. With 400 amateur fights behind him, as well as a gold medal from the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Casamayor snuck across the border from Mexico where he had been training with the Cuban Olympic Team in 1996. Bitter at his treatment under the Fidel Castro regime—one famous story had Casamayor awarded with a bicycle after his Olympic triumph, which Casamayor traded in for a pig to feed his family—he left several family members behind, hoping to slice off a piece of the American dream.

In some ways, Casamayor has done fine, winning the WBA belt at 130 and THE RING championship at 135. He's made money. His toothy grin and his brassy personality have made him one of boxing's characters. But his habit of cruising during fights has made many of his bouts closer than they needed to be. His last bout prior to Katsidis, a hotly disputed points win over Jose Armando Santa Cruz, made us wonder how much longer he'd keep THE RING belt.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

After surviving the sixth-round knockdown, Casamayor gradually regained control of the fight and ended Katsidis' championship bid with a humongous left hook in the 10th. The Australian beat the count, only to be rescued after taking a few more punches.

As if to erase the bad memory of his last bout, it was a crafty and focused Casamayor who came out for round one against Katsidis, dropping the youngster twice with sneaky left hands. Katsidis pounded his way back and dominated the middle rounds, culminating in the sixth with a windstorm of punches that sent Casamayor backward through the ropes and onto the ring apron. Casamayor remained calmer than most fighters would be in the same situation. He simply stood up and climbed back into the ring with a sheepish look on his face, like a husband sneaking home after a late night out.

Casamayor's subtle defiance of the rules can chip away at an opponent. Early in the seventh, when Katsidis had had enough of the Cuban's mauling, he hurled Casamayor to the canvas. That was the beginning of the end for Katsidis. His frustration was leaking out of him like the blood around his eyes.

Still, Katsidis was nudging ahead on the scorecards, helped partly when Casamayor had a point deducted for a foul in the ninth. But the frenzied style that had served Katsidis well in 23 previous fights only hastened his demise.

At the top of the 10th, Katsidis walked into a Casamayor left hook that ruined him. He collapsed, rose, and then galloped head-on into a short right that nearly dropped him a second time. When referee Jon Schorle stopped the fight at 0:30 of the 10th, Katsidis simply leaned on Schorle, gazing across the ring, a sad first-grader watching the circus leave town.

"I threw it all out the window," Katsidis said later. "I will be back."

Katsidis, 23-1 (20), should've known what was in store before the bout even started. When Katsidis entered the ring wearing his Greek warrior's helmet, The Brush went nose to nose with him, creating some commotion in Katsidis' corner that knocked the helmet ajar so it covered Katsidis' eyes. Momentarily blinded, Katsidis had experienced the veteran's first blast of one upmanship.

The fight was a good one, partly because Katsidis forced Casamayor into action. Katsidis could force a dead man into a brawl. But Katsidis now has

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR DKP

Unlike Diaz' previous 33 pro opponents, Campbell was able to stand toe-to-toe with "The Baby Bull," take his best shots, and eventually dish out more punishment than he took. The win was the biggest of Campbell's erratic career and earned him the number-one contender spot in THE RING *ratings.*

to get back in line, for Casamayor, 36-3-1 (22), has other challenges ahead of him. Ironically, Casamayor's most logical challenger is another 36-year-old codger, Nate Campbell.

Two weeks before Casamayor knocked off Katsidis, Campbell bested Juan "The Baby Bull" Diaz in a snarling 12-rounder that consisted mostly of heated infighting. Campbell, an inconsistent fighter in the past, certainly had the right idea against Diaz, staying close and wearing him down to a dull nub. By the end, via split decision, the alphabet belts Diaz had accumulated during the past few years shifted over to Campbell.

Campbell's background was no less difficult than Casamayor's. He grew up on the east side of Jacksonville, Florida, a few blocks from Alltel Stadium. While Campbell was in and out of foster homes and attending a total of 15 public schools, those close to him were in and out of jail. One of his uncles incarcerated at Raiford Penitentiary taught Campbell how to box.

After years of drifting through odd jobs and a patchwork education, he began boxing professionally at age 27.

Equipped with a heavy punch, he was undefeated until he met Casamayor in 2003. Typically, Casamayor did just enough to win. Campbell floundered after Casamayor beat him, going 5-4-1 during the next three years. He was also having a problematic personal life.

"There were enough caskets to go around," Campbell told *The Tampa Tribune*. "Gunshots, heart attacks, drug overdoses. They were just dropping off. It seemed like every Monday I was burying somebody I cared about. I never could get my head on straight."

There was also a divorce and problems with the police. Cleared of charges in a recent domestic assault case, Campbell, 36-5-1 (25), resumed his career in a big way by beating Diaz.

Judging by the brazen way he approached Casamayor in the ring after the Cuban had kayoed Katsidis, it's obvious that Campbell craves what Casamayor has: recognition as the linear champion. Casamayor was less than intrigued.

"Nate Campbell? Who is Nate Campbell? I said I want to fight the best fighters out there. I am the god of boxing. I proved that I am the best," said Casamayor, who went on to call out Manny Pacquiao and Marco Antonio Barrera.

But Casamayor-Campbell II would have some juice to it. Both fighters are coming off of impressive wins. Plus, Casamayor has THE RING belt, and Campbell has a very good argument that he's the best at 135. Add to this the bile that comes up every time the fighters speak of each other, and the rematch seems a no-brainer.

Here are some of the verbal shots they've been throwing, taken from various Internet sources:

Campbell on Casamayor's RING magazine belt (maxboxing.com): "I'm the best lightweight in the world. I

proved that against Juan Diaz. Joel Casamayor doesn't want any part of me. He would rather fight his mother than fight me. On his best night, he didn't beat me; they had to give him the decision he didn't deserve. So how's he going to beat me now that he's washed-up?"

Casamayor on the alphabet titles (ESPN.com): "To be honest, it pisses me off. But it also makes me laugh when they talk about others as the champion. Look at their records. Look at the people they fought. I'm the true lightweight champion. When you fight against me, you got to prepare for me. I don't have to prepare for you. You know what I'm saying? At 135, there's only one King Kong—Joel Casamayor."

Campbell (who happens to be the grandfather of an infant girl) on who is fighting better with age (boxingtalk.com): "I think I'm boxing better, I'm punching better ... what is he doing better? He's holding better, he's getting better decisions from the judges, and he's butting better. But he's definitely not fighting better."

Casamayor on Campbell (boxingtalk.com): "To me, Katsidis is tougher than Nate Campbell. If they

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Most fans would love to see Casamayor (above) and Campbell (below) fight each other, but it appears this will not happen in the near future. Casamayor's promoters think Don King needs to build Campbell's marquee value before a match with the champ would be worthwhile.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

A battered Diaz between rounds of the Campbell fight. After losing for the first time as a pro, the popular Houston boxer is hoping to rebuild his career with Golden Boy Promotions.

put Nate Campbell in front of us, we're knocking Nate Campbell out. There's no question about it."

Casamayor on allegations that he's afraid of Campbell (boxingtalk.com): "He gets knocked out twice by Robbie Peden. Now I'm scared if I don't fight him? F___ Nate Campbell."

Shouldn't these two be matched just for the trash talk? And if Casamayor only fights as hard as he has to, Campbell would make him fight every step of the way. It's definitely the fight we want. But it's not likely to happen. Not soon, anyway.

One hurdle is money. Casamayor is an aging father of nine who wants as much cash as possible. He has a point when he says Campbell isn't a big enough name. Also, according to the champion's promoter, Golden Boy Promotions, Casamayor's next opponent will probably be the recently vanquished Juan Diaz.

Some think Casamayor is too experienced for Diaz, but Golden Boy CEO Schaefer dismisses Diaz' loss to Campbell as "an off-night." That's what GBP is counting on, having just signed Diaz to a two-year, eight-fight contract.

Diaz is not a fighter who makes adjustments *during* a fight. Against Campbell, he couldn't get things going once he lost momentum. But he does make adjustments *between* fights. In 2001, he looked horrible against Ubaldo Hernandez, barely escaping with a split decision win. He regrouped and won 21 fights in a row. After losing to Campbell, he'll regroup again. Still, Casamayor might be too much too soon.

In a way, the lightweight scene is like a bad romance novel: Campbell yearns for Casamayor, Casamayor yearns for Pacquiao, Pacquiao yearns for even larger game. Will any of them get what they want?

As for Campbell-Casamayor II, Schaefer didn't sound enthusiastic. "Right now, it's up to Don King to show what he can do with Campbell," he said. "If Campbell continues to win, perhaps someday in the future there will be a fight with Casamayor or a rematch with Diaz.

"I'm taking it as a personal challenge to help Juan become the fighter I think he can be. My challenge is to take Juan higher than Don King can take Campbell. Of course, I'm happy for Campbell, he's a very tough guy, and I hope the best for him."

The best may well have been a rematch with his rival Casamayor.

Legendary sportswriter Red Smith once wrote, "Young men have visions. Old men have dreams. The best place for old men to dream is by the fire." He was writing about the late career struggles of Joe Louis, who was about the same age as Casamayor and Campbell are now. But Casamayor and Campbell are still fresh young fighters in comparison to the 36-year-olds of Red Smith's era. By fighting less often, today's fighters last a bit longer. Even if they are both 36, Casamayor-Campbell II would be the most intriguing lightweight fight of 2008.

Unfortunately, although he's not an old man yet, Campbell may have to spend some time dreaming about it by the fire. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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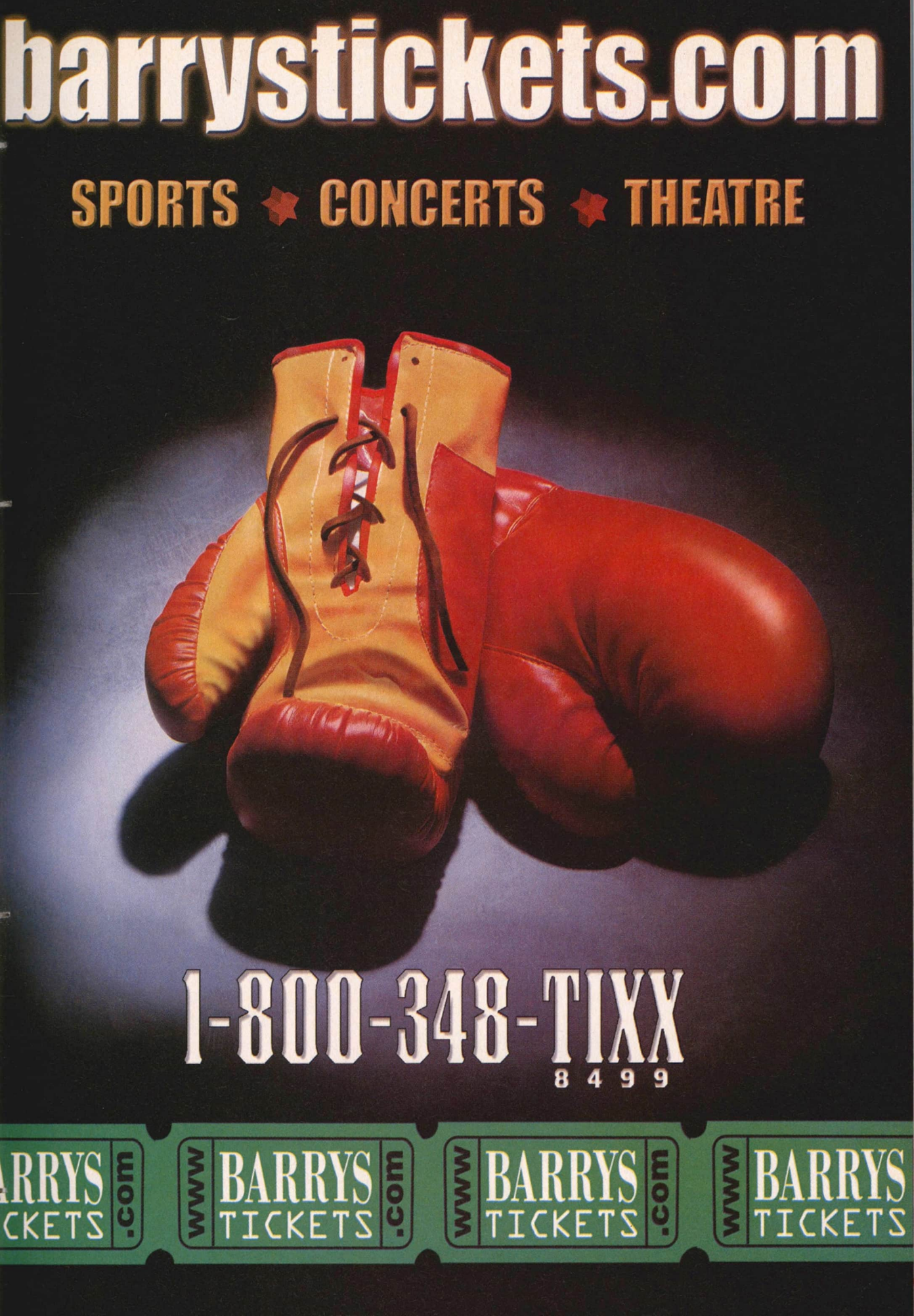

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THE RING VISITS CUBA

In many ways, Havana is a city where time has stood still since the Cuban revolution in 1959, but boxing is still an important part of the culture, and vestiges of past glory and the promise of tomorrow can still be found, frequently side-by-side.

Where Boxing History Began A Half-Century Ago

Text & Photos By Robert Cassidy

There are roughly 11 million people in Cuba. Yet, there are six Cubans in the International Boxing Hall of Fame and, since 1972, there have been 32 gold medalists (despite Cuba having boycotted two Olympics). For an island the size of Pennsylvania, it seemed to produce a disproportionate number of great boxers.

I had to go.

In February, I traveled to Cuba with television producer Fred Rosenberg to explore the boxing scene. They say that sports and politics don't mix. In Cuba, they fit like a hand inside a glove. Given the relationship between our governments, I expected to be kept at arm's length by most people. There were times when I had a notebook out or we had a camera rolling, and that was exactly the case. When we went off the record, we were embraced. People wanted to talk boxing, as long as their words didn't come back to haunt them.

It may be hard for us to understand, but for a country in

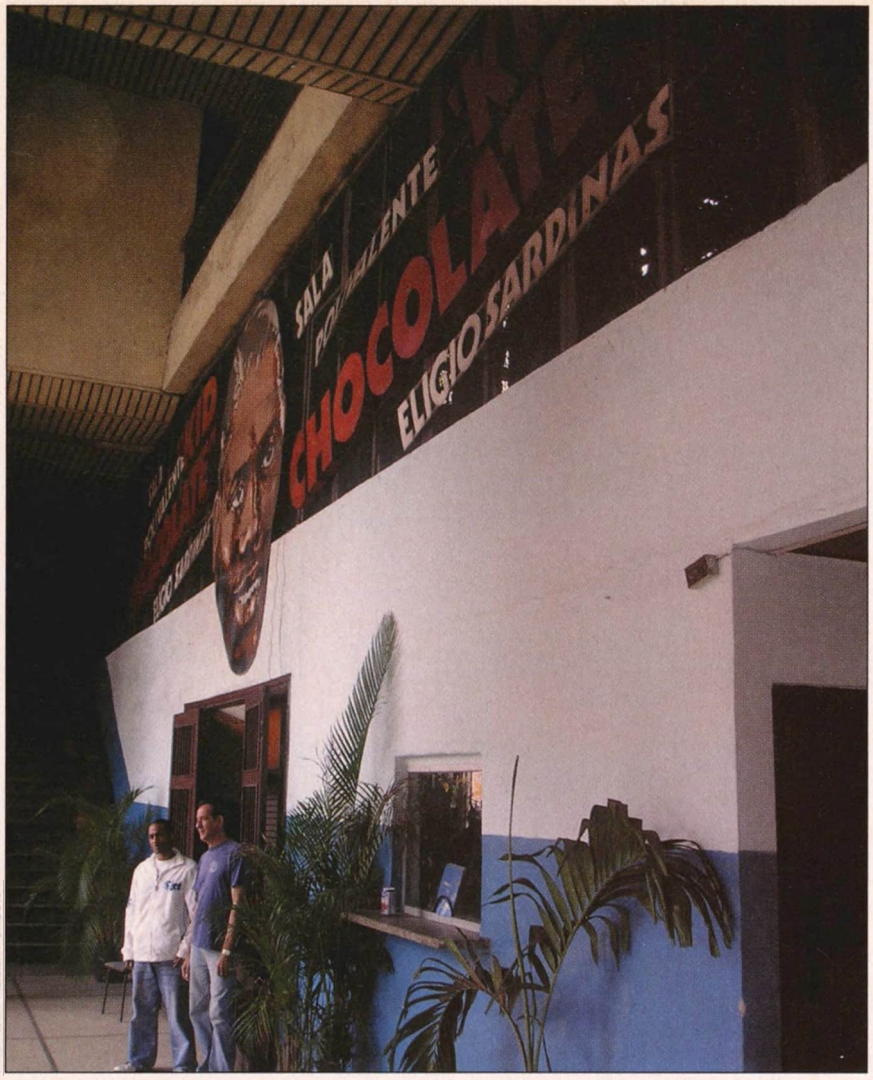


PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Kid Chocolate, Cuba's first world champion, is still a national hero and has an arena named after him. The former featherweight champion died in 1988 and is buried in a cemetery reserved for prominent Cubans. Chocolate held featherweight and junior lightweight titles in the 1930s.

which the government controls the flow of information, freedom of speech can be a scary proposition. That is why it was hard to feel completely comfortable inside of Cuba. At times, you got the sense that you are constantly moving under a cloud of suspicion. We arranged for a translator, Marco, and a driver, Victor. They are both wonderful people, as were most of the Cubans we encountered. Even so, there are still subjects during which they surveyed the surroundings before speaking. And we could not invite them to our hotel room because Cubans are forbidden to enter tourist hotels.

Attempting to reach boxers, we are told, would be difficult. Since the defections of gold medalists Yuriorkis Gamboa, Odlanier Solis, and Yan Bathelemy in December 2006 and the failed defection of gold medalist Guillermo Rigondeaux last summer, the government has restricted the movements of its fighters and the access to them.

Havana is quaint and bustling and colorful. There are billboards that celebrate the Communist revolution all over the city. The image of Che Guevara rivals that of only Fidel Castro for face time in the city. The most common photo of Che is the same one Mike Tyson has tattooed on his abdomen.

We inquired about Che, and Marco related this story: One of Marco's neighbors had a son who was arrested when Castro took power. She claimed her son was not political, but was rounded up and jailed with many who were suspected of working for deposed leader Fulgencio Batista. The woman visited him twice weekly in prison. One day she spoke to Che and pleaded for his release.

"It is difficult for me to visit my son. I travel a far distance and at my age it is not easy."

"I will alleviate you of this burden," he responded. "Tomorrow, your son will be executed."

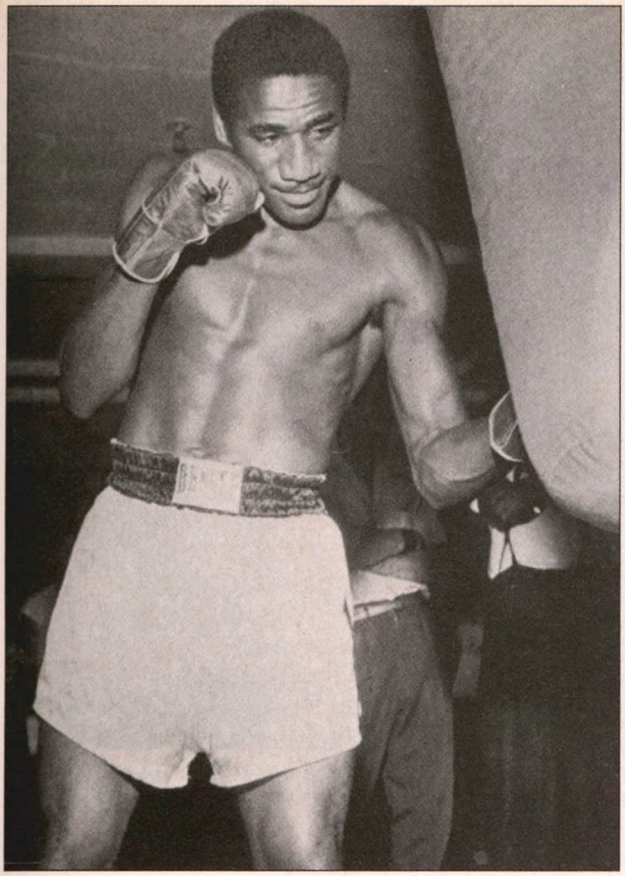
It is the harsh reality of history in Cuba. Boxing history, much like everything else there, begins with Castro. For decades, people remember only what Fidel wanted them to remember. Athletes who excelled prior to the 1959 revolution are almost non-entities. Those who left were expunged from the record books and the consciousness of the Cuban people. Therefore, when asked if they remembered Luis Rodriguez or Jose Napoles, the answer is, "No."

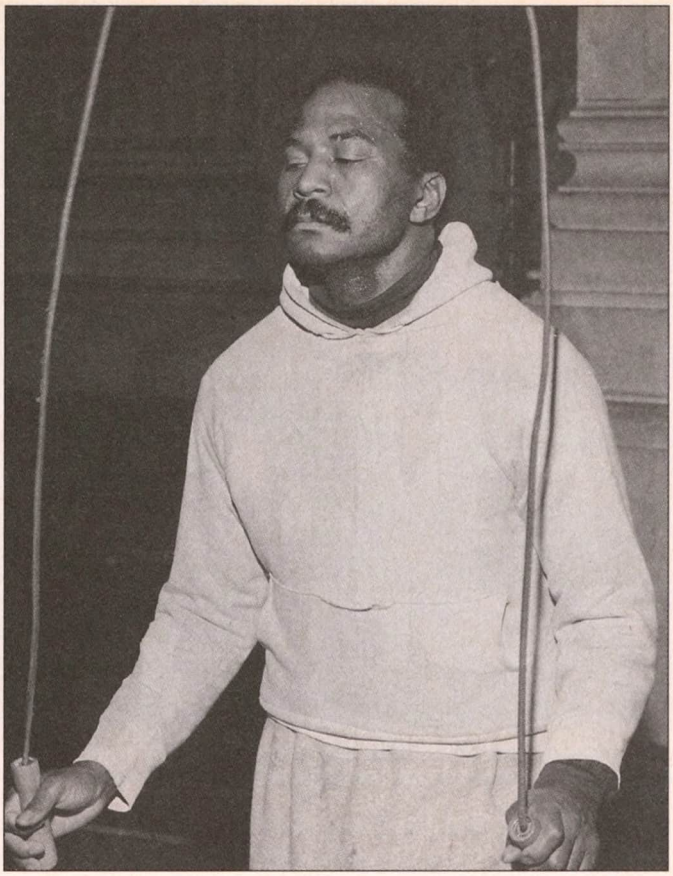
The lone icon that predates the revolution is Kid Chocolate. It is not so much that he is a Hall of Famer, but that he never left Cuba. When he died in 1988, he was interred at a special cemetery reserved for prominent Cubans. He now lives forever on El Prado, a picturesque, tree-lined boulevard that cuts through the heart of Old Havana. Across from the old Capitol building sits Kid Chocolate Arena. It is used for basketball, volleyball, judo, and, of course, boxing. Inside the gated fence there is a makeshift shrine to Chocolate.

Rafael Fernandez, an attendant at the arena, took us to the shrine, which was more like what you would see on the side of a road to mark the location of a fatal car accident. There were a few pictures of Chocolate, ripped from the pages of boxing magazines, a small snapshot of Fidel posing with his family, several boxing trophies, photographs of fights inside the arena, and some pictures marking the revolution.

Fernandez gave us a basic history of Chocolate. I asked him who he thought was the best Cuban boxer of all-time. He mentioned Chocolate, and then said maybe Kid Gavilan, Felix Savon, and Teofilio Stevenson. I ask who was better, Savon or Stevenson?

"They should have fought each other," he said, smiling.





Most contemporary Cubans have never heard of countrymen Luis Rodriguez (left) and Jose Napoles (right), both of who fled Cuba when Fidel Castro banned professional boxing and became world champions. Today, both are enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Fernandez took us inside the arena, but no pictures please. With the advent of blogging, YouTube, and other personal Internet posting services, the government feels foreigners are exploiting Cuban treasures by leaving the island and posting pictures and videos online.

Fernandez had one more request before we left: "Please take a picture of me and e-mail it to my daughter. She lives in New York."

Not far from the arena sits the Rafael Trejo Gym, one of the oldest and most famous on the island. Every great Cuban trained or boxed inside its walls. It is an open-air gym, surrounded by dilapidated buildings. A ring, looking equally worn, sits in the middle of the gym. There are rows of wooden bleachers on two sides of the ring and an area to do floorwork and hit the bags on the other two sides. When I say bags, I mean old car tires or canvas sacks that looked as if they were once used for hauling potatoes.

In the foyer, we meet the gym's trainer, a former fighter who is tall, well muscled, and dressed in the red warmup suit of the Cuban national team. He refuses an interview request, but enjoys the idle boxing chitchat. He shows us inside, but again, we are told no pictures.

This time I can't resist. I climb halfway up the bleachers, put my camera on the seat next to me and hit record, filming a young Cuban boxer sparring with a pug from Spain who came to train with the best amateurs in the world. The Cuban kid looks younger and lighter, but is still getting the better of his spar mate.

The dean of Cuban sportswriters is Sigfredo Barros, who writes a column for Granma, the government-controlled newspaper. He is exceedingly pleasant and knowledgeable of sports on both sides of the Florida Straits. "I love Alex Rodriguez," he opens the conversation with. "But $25-million a year? $25-million? That's too much."

We quickly move to the subject of Cuban boxing.

"There was Kid Gavilan, Kid Tunero," said Barros. "But I believe the best boxer in Cuban history is Kid Chocolate. I have read about him. I have seen films. THE RING magazine said he was the best fighter in his weight class in the history of boxing. His movements were like a black panther. He was sleek, he was elegant."

I asked Barros who was the best fighter since the Olympic movement began.

"With all due respect to Mr. Felix Savon, for me, it's Teofilio Stevenson," he said. "I never saw a combination of velocity, style, and power as Stevenson."

Stevenson's victory over Duane Bobick at the 1972 Olympics was a defining moment for the Cuban sports machine. As they say on the island, one of greatest triumphs of the revolution has been its sports program.

"It was not just because Duane Bobick was an American," said Barros, "but Bobick defeated Stevenson in the Pan Am Games. When he arrived in Munich

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Outside the legendary Rafael Trejo Gym, where generations of great Cuban boxers have trained. Unfortunately, THE RING team was not permitted to photograph inside.

and said he could beat Stevenson again, all Cubans, said, 'Okay!" So we waited for the fight, and Teofilio Stevenson destroyed Duane Bobick. All of Cuba was excited. Teofilio Stevenson became a national hero. He's tall; he's elegant. He speaks with everybody. He's a normal person. He speaks with me; he speaks with you. He's very popular."

We were about to find out if he would actually speak to me.

A call was placed to Stevenson the next morning, and by late-afternoon we were sitting in his living room. That is the equivalent of cold-calling Muhammad Ali and getting invited over to watch the fights. Stevenson lives in Verdado, a suburb of Havana near the water. His house is nice by Cuban standards, modest by American. His wife, Fraymaris, who seats us in the living room and offers refreshments, greets us at the gate. We also meet Stevenson's young son David as we wait for the champion to make his entrance.

There are several pictures of Stevenson on the walls of the living room, either in the ring or at banquets posing with famous Cubans. It was a 10-minute wait before Stevenson emerged. He greeted Fred and posed for pictures. He then took me into his den where there were more photos of his fighting days. On the center wall of the den was a collage of his knockout of Bobick. He was looking for a highlight reel of his fights, but explained that he lent it to a friend and had yet to get it back.

Fred offers to take the group out for dinner. All seven of us pile into Victor's 1957 Chevy. We arrive at a pallador—one of the rare instances of free enterprise in Cuba.

Fidel recently allowed people to expand their homes and serve food. It was a way to make extra money in addition to the government stipend that every Cuban receives. This house was exquisite. It was lit primarily with candles, had six tables, a bar, and a private room for a small party. It was the only place that I saw on the island that served Coca-Cola.

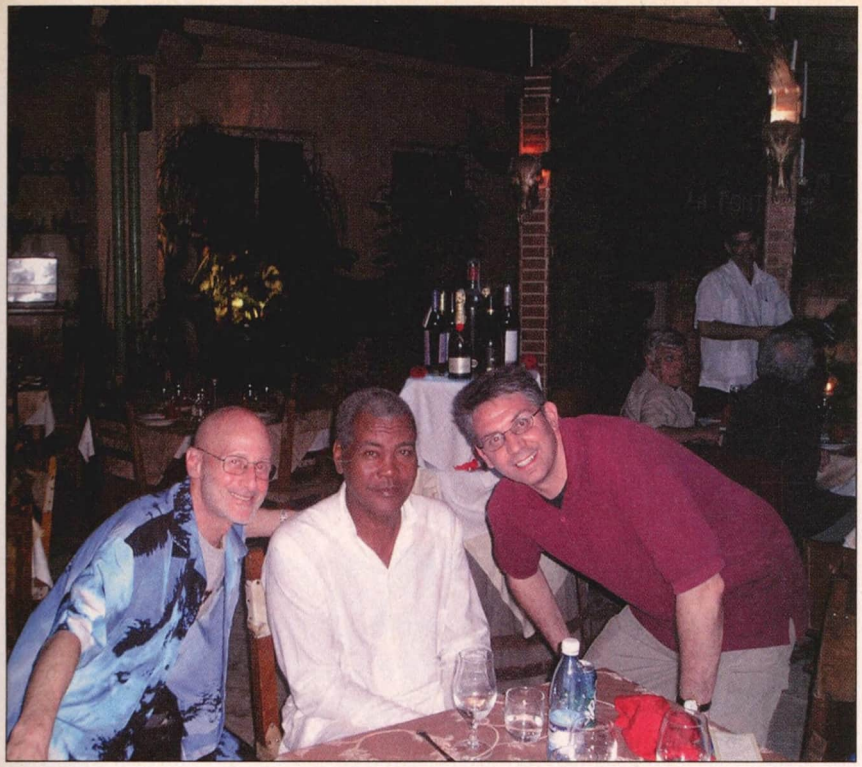
At dinner I suggest Stevenson would have won a fourth gold medal in 1984 had Cuba competed.

"Seoul too," he said, referring to the next Olympics and that he would have won a fifth gold.

I ask him why he doesn't train fighters. "I spent enough time in gyms," he said.

Like most restaurants in Cuba, there

Duane Bobick congratulates Teofilo Stevenson after the Cuban stopped him at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, Germany. Cubans still consider it one of the greatest moments in their nation's sporting history.



More than 35 years after his victory over Bobick, Stevenson poses with producer Fred Rosenberg (left) and writer Cassidy during a festive meal they shared in suburban Havana.

was live music. Fred summons the band and requests the famous Latino ballad "Besame Mucho" (Kiss Me Much.) Everyone at the table (except me) sings it in Spanish. Stevenson sings it to his wife, and she, with her hands clasped over her heart, sings right back at him. Fred was between them, singing right along and rocking side to side. It was the most surreal moment of the trip.

Many of the reports I've read in American media outlets paint Stevenson as a drunken, obnoxious ogre. This was not the man we found. He was boxing royalty and acted the part. Like a lot of famous athletes, he seemed restless, as if his motor was always running. He would get up from the table, go talk to other people at another table, and then come back. He was flirty with the waitress, even though his wife was present. And once he came back to the table holding a small child that he and his wife fawned over.

He drank with dinner, but not excessively. He loosened up a bit by the end of the night. As we arrived back at his house, he had his arm draped around Fred's shoulder and told him, "You have a home right here if you ever come back to Cuba."

Stevenson looked north and said, "Why can't we all get along?" He then shook his head, "Ah, Bush!"

We posed for more pictures. We learned that he thinks the greatest heavyweight of all-time was Joe Louis. I asked him about a favorite of mine, his former teammate, Rolando Garbey, a junior middleweight who won a silver medal in 1968 and bronze in 1976. "He's doing great," said Stevenson. "He lives nearby and he is a coach on the national team."

Then I ask about Ramon Garbey, Rolando's nephew, who defected prior to the 1996 Olympics and flopped as a pro in the United States. Stevenson simply shook his head no. There are some things he just won't talk about.

Barros diplomatically addressed the sentiment toward those who defect. "We don't want to lose any prospects, because we are only 11 million citizens," he said. "For me, it is sad. You watch an athlete, you watch him develop. You watch him grow and achieve. And then he leaves you. He leaves his family, his country. To me, there is nothing but sadness."

On the day before we leave, Victor

DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The effects of steroids: If steroids compelled men to kill their families, the terrible sound of James Toney, married father of six, slinging deviled eggs down his throat would right now be echoing throughout his otherwise silent, corpse-strewn house.

Post-fight interviews: If you too were wondering why Vic Darchinyan made no real sense five minutes after getting pancaked, consider that five minutes before, he'd gotten pancaked. Why are people always surprised when a fighter who's just suffered a concussion says nonsensical things?

The white stuff: If you've never seen (Alexander) Povetkin, picture mayonnaise in short pants and gloves. This guy is so white he makes Sultan Ibragimov look like Wesley Snipes.

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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drives us out to La Lisa, where the Roberto Balado Gym is located. Balado, a super heavyweight who won gold at the 1992 Olympics, died in car accident in 1994. He had defeated Oleg Maskaev, Larry Donald, and Jo-el Scott in his career. Vernon Forrest once told me that he believed Balado was the best pure boxer on the Cuban team.

As we drive to the gym along the scenic Malecon, Havana's seawall, we pass the U.S. Embassy. The building is enclosed by 20-foot-high chain link fences and police officers are stationed approximately every 25 feet around the entire property. I say to Marco, "For a country that doesn't really like us, they do a pretty good job of protecting our embassy."

He laughed. "That's not for you, it's for us."

We arrive at Balado and it's very much like Trejo. It's an open-air facility and run down. There are three boys training, between ages 10 and12. They each have advanced skills for their age and one looks well developed as a fighter. They punch old tires that hang from wires and one beats a large truck tire with something that resembles a sledgehammer. It's easy to imagine them as the future of the Cuban national team.

PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Aspiring young boxers spar at the Roberto Balado Gym in La Lisa. Balado won the super heavyweight gold medal at the 1992 Olympics, but was tragically killed in a 1994 auto accident.

Marco asks the boys some questions. Who is Roberto Balado?

"He is our hero. He was a boxer, just like us."

Who is your favorite boxer?

The answers come quickly—Yuriorkis Gamboa and Guillermo Rigondeaux are among their favorites. Apparently the news of their defection hasn't reached their world. Those names, once synonymous with Cuban excellence, are now hardly spoken on the island. Marco was hesitant to say them out loud.

Watching the boys train, Marco recalls a story of how a junior national team traveled to Italy. When the tournament ended, there was an elaborate food spread to mark the close of the trip. As the Cuban fighters passed through the buffet, they took meager portions of food. The coach encouraged them to take more.

"But they still refused the food," related Marco. "One of them said to the coach, 'This is all my mama allows me to have.' It was so sad. They didn't know what to do; they were almost overwhelmed by all the food."

Two days after we left Cuba, Fidel Castro resigned his post as president. His brother Raul was named successor. Since then, restrictions on cell phones, microwave ovens, and, yes, even the tourist hotels, were lifted. For the three boys in Roberto Balado Gym, the future, in general, is already starting to look better. ■

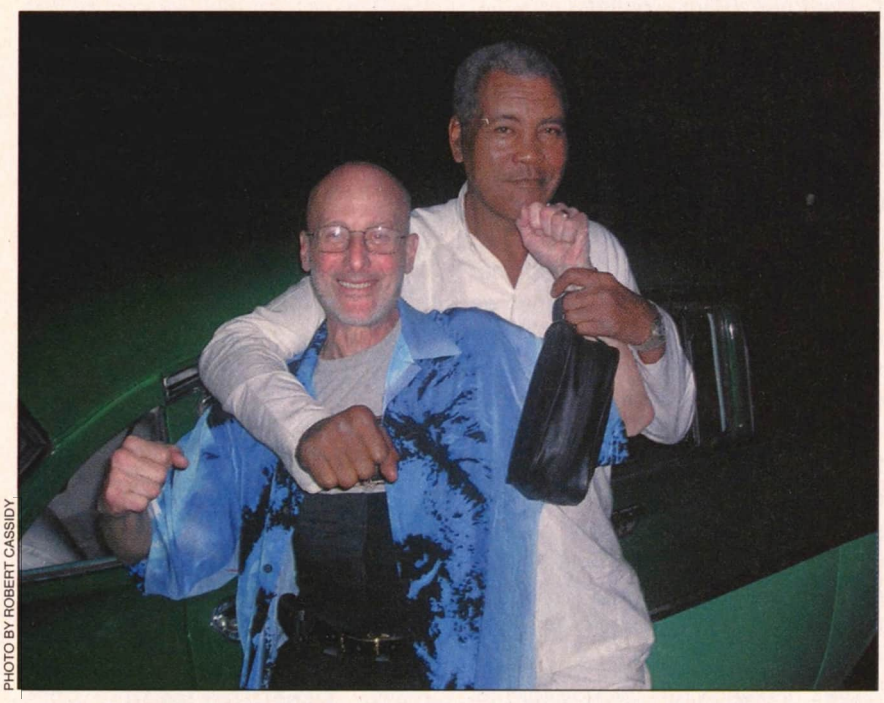
PHOTO BY ROBERT CASSIDY

Rosenberg and Stevenson clown around prior to the Americans' departure. Before they left, the Cuban icon lamented that the relationship between their governments is so strained, especially when the people share so much in common.

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of THE RING and a frequent contributor.

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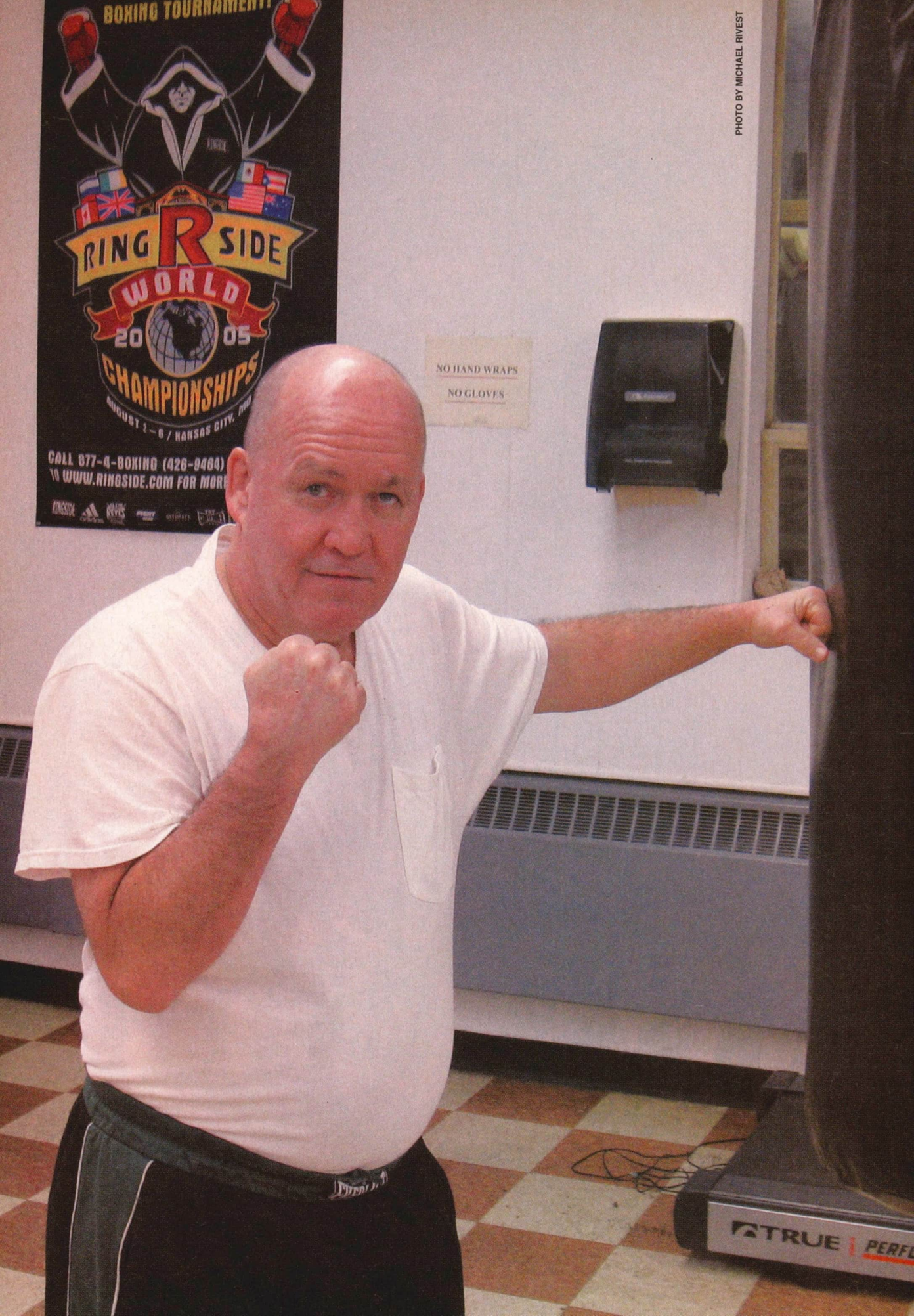


PHOTO BY MICHAEL RIVEST

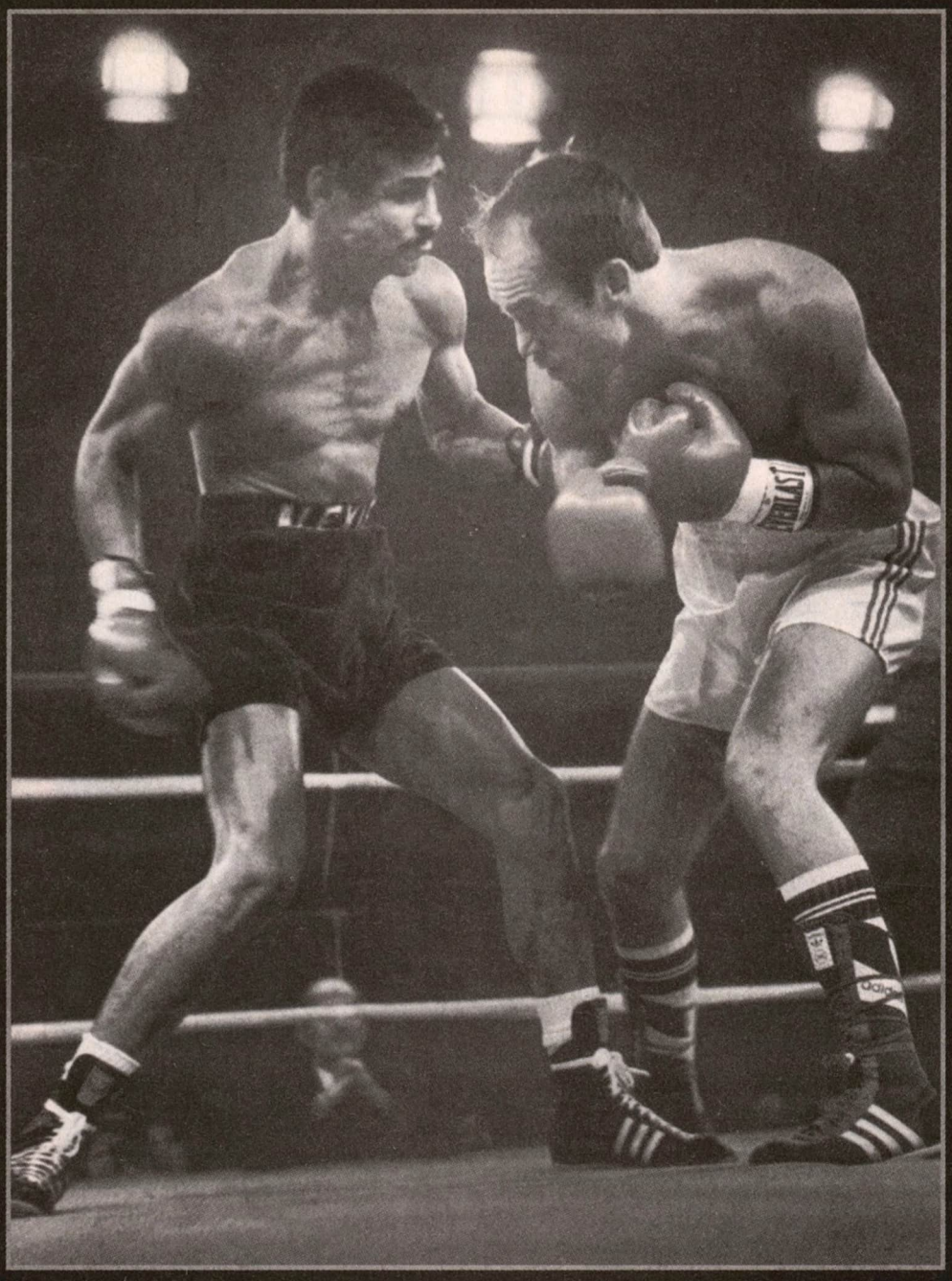
Seeing Clearly, Though A Little Sideways

KEVIN ROONEY RECLAIMS HIS LIFE

By Michael Rivest

Joyce Carol Oates was only half right to call boxing "America's tragic theater." As much metaphor for life as any sport, the Sweet Science is known for its humbled heroes brought low by hubris. But unlike the fallen heroes of Greek tragedy, fighters are practiced in the art of getting back up. Enter Kevin Rooney—maybe.

Something darker than hope is behind the bright blue eyes that reveal the aftermath of a lot of punches. "I have to look a little sideways to see clearly," Rooney said, peering thoughtfully into the ring at Albany, New York's Quail Street Boxing Gym. "Something happened to the right eye in my last fight, in '85."



Rooney had only one loss in 20 pro bouts when he faced future Hall of Famer Alexis Arguello in 1982. But after Arguello knocked him out in the second round, Rooney's career sputtered, and he retired in 1985.

There's a self-assured fierceness in that look, the kind you'd need to step into the ring with the great Alexis Arguello, knowing the odds of victory are slim and that you're likely to take a beating. Arguello knocked out Rooney in the second round of their 1982 Atlantic City showdown, but he's just as undaunted now as he rises from life's canvas to mix it up with an even more deadly foe—the disease alcoholism.

Rooney, now paunchy and looking older that his 51 years, comes to the Albany gym three mornings each week to train whoever's lucky enough to be there at the time. It's been eight months since a felony DWI conviction placed him in a drug and alcohol rehab center, just walking distance away.

"It was either that or jail again," said Rooney, who landed in the Greene County Jail for more than five months in 2004, following an alcohol-related incident. "I'm on what they call Level III at the rehab now, which means I can come here or go to AA meetings. When I first got there, I didn't 'get it,' but it's different now."

His eyebrows furrow and he looks down like he's searching the designs in the linoleum for the implications of this new insight. "It's just different."

Tragic flaws can drop the high and mighty like a punch to the solar plexus, and Rooney has tragic flaws. It's been a long way down for the once good fighter and even better trainer. He had wealth, the admiration of people in and out of the boxing world, and a loving family. In his hometown of Catskill, New York, he was a god, and couldn't walk down Main Street without somebody shouting from a passing car. Life was about as good as it gets.

Then his excesses took over. He drank, he gambled, and bit-by-bit it all slipped away. The poet Blake claimed that "The path of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," but Rooney seemed determined to prove him wrong. Excess taught him nothing. Soon, all he had was gone.

Many still believe in Rooney, those who know that you don't count out a true fighter until the very end. They understand that boxing and life call for the same qualities: courage, tenacity, the ability to walk with fear of the unknown, and, most of all, the willingness to get back up.

They know that this is the same Kevin Rooney whose discipline, focus, and sheer force of will took him to the 147-pound sub-novice NYC Golden Gloves Championship in 1975, and to a professional record of 21-4-1 (7). Along the way, he also sparred with Roberto Duran, Vito Antuofermo, Wilfred Benitez, and Mustafa Hamsho.

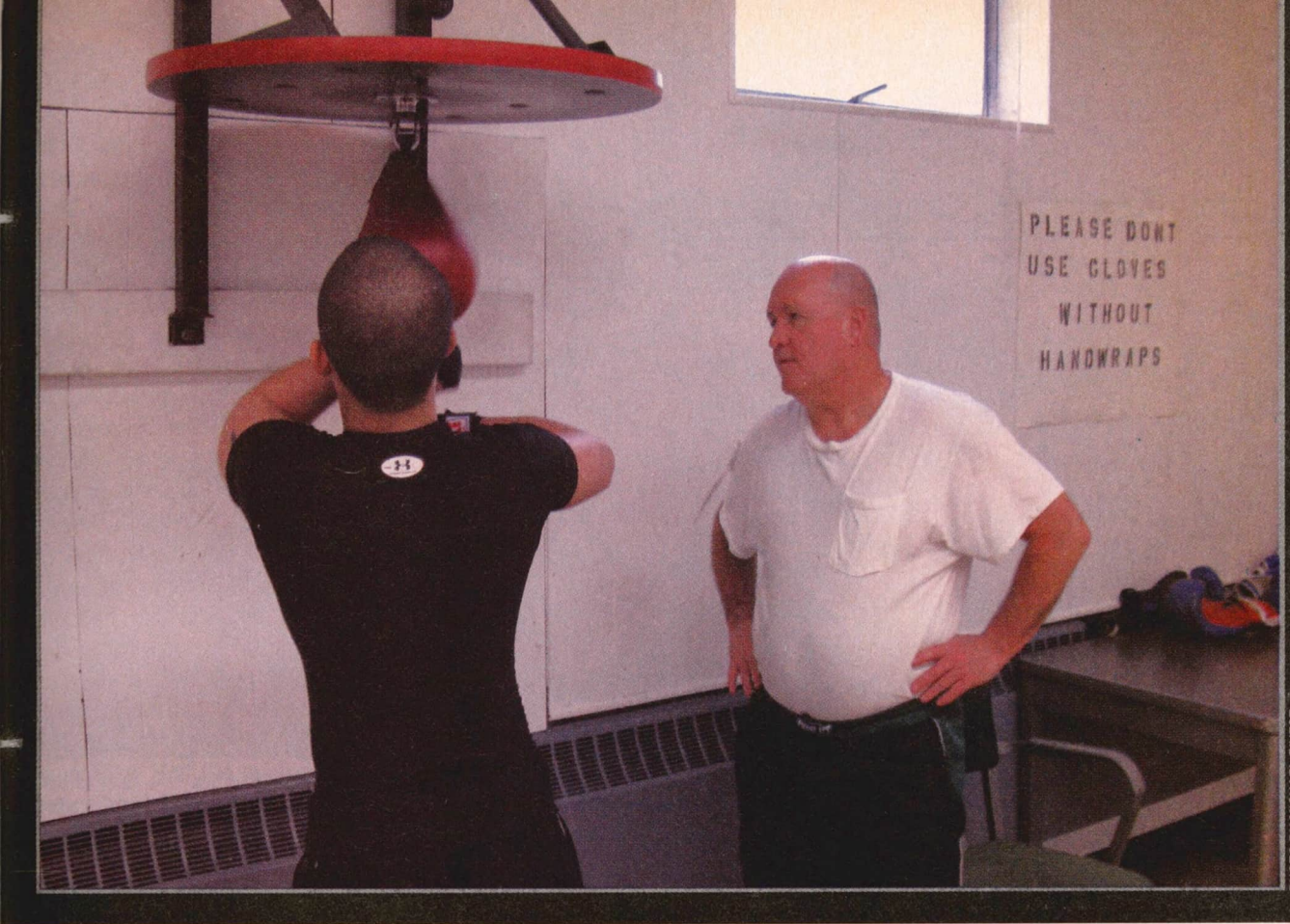


PHOTO BY MICHAEL RIVEST

Out of rehab and back in the harness, Rooney is training boxers at the Quail Street Boxing Gym in Albany, New York, where he hopes to get back on track following a lifetime battle with alcohol addiction. An alcohol-related incident landed him in jail for five months in 2004.

"I more than held my own with all those guys but Duran," recalled Rooney. "He was the hardest puncher I ever fought, and I sparred with him for free."

The conversation moved to the gym office to escape the rhythmic rat-a-tat of speed bags and the interruption of young fighters with cameras and questions. But for the determined, a closed door is just an invitation to knock. After all, some guy with a notepad had usurped their precious time at the feet of a boxing legend.

"I'll be done when I'm done," Rooney shouted through the door, smirking. He minimizes his fame. "Most of these guys are too young to know about me on their own. Somebody must have told them I trained Mike Tyson, that's all. Now, all of a sudden, I'm the guy they always wanted to work with."

Later, over coffee in a diner, he seems genuinely surprised when the too-busy-to-smile waitress pauses to say, "You're welcome, Kevin" to his "Thanks" for the coffee. As though to add an exclamation point to the moment, a passerby with an outstretched hand said, "I'm a huge fan."

Such is the power of boxing and its allure. It resonates with something deep inside us, making it more than just a sport, and fighters much more than just athletes. Despite its controversy in a world that expels 10-year-olds from school for drawing pictures of a water gun, the ring remains the place where humans meet and defeat fear.

"Cus used to say that," said Rooney, referring to legendary trainer Cus D'Amato, who taught Rooney about boxing and life, and how the former is a metaphor of the latter. Together, they transformed Tyson from a troubled kid to the youngest heavyweight titleholder in history.

"What people forget is that I was the youngest trainer who took the youngest fighter to the heavyweight championship," added Rooney, who was 30 when Tyson beat Trevor Berbick for the WBC heavyweight title.

It was only after D'Amato died and Tyson jettisoned Rooney upon signing with Don King that the fighter's life unraveled.

"I don't have anything bad to say about Mike, but King, that's a different story," said Rooney. "He represents the other side of boxing, the side that's only about money—his money."

It wasn't until years later that Rooney proved he wasn't a one-trick pony by helping rebuild Vinny Pazienza's (who has since legally changed his name to Paz) career following a horrendous auto crash in 1991.

"Nobody believed he'd walk again, let alone fight," said Rooney, his high-pitched voice rising with pride. "But we knew different."

Paz, not one to hold back in the ring or in life, was effusive in his praise for Rooney.

"I love Kevin Rooney," he said. "He's my friend and my brother. After my accident, I knew only three trainers

Rooney wraps Mike Tyson's hands in preparation for a workout in 1988. It was as Iron Mike's trainer that Rooney became rich and famous, but their relationship soured after Don King began to promote Tyson. Even so, Rooney has nothing bad to say about Tyson.

could help: Angelo Dundee, Eddie Futch, or Kevin Rooney. I picked Kevin. There's so much more to Kevin than meets the eye. He's very deep, very spiritual."

"I know that God is looking out for me. Too many things have happened in my life for that not to be true," said Rooney, his surprisingly small hands clenching around the sides of the table as he talks about his roller-coaster beginnings. "Things were pretty up and down for me as a kid. It could have gone either way. My parents tried hard, but they had problems."

Alcoholism, so often a family disease, made no exception for the Rooney household. While both Dan and Mary Rooney struggled with it, his father would become abusive when he drank, once dropping Kevin with a blow when the 14 year-old tried to stand between his father's rage and his mother's vulnerability.

His anger at his father remains buried deep. Dan Rooney died in 1984, leaving their pained history unresolved. Growing up angry on the streets of Staten Island, New York, trouble was just a crap game or streetfight away. And Rooney had his share of those, along with a few rides in stolen cars.

"I should have wound up in Riker's Island," said Rooney. "I think it was God who had me walk into that boxing gym in 1973. God was saying, 'Here's your way out.'"

Other folks might report burning bush experiences while walking through the woods on a snowy evening, but not Rooney. Tranquil walks were not in his life's script. He tells of the time he should have died in a streetfight, his head still bearing the imprint of a pipe that wasn't designed to wound. "I have no explanation for why I lived. God wanted me around. I'm still not sure why."

He paused, as this memory seems to trigger another, more poignant one when he felt the power of something larger than himself.

"I remember when my Uncle Jackie died," he said. "I was at the funeral parlor and when I touched his head to say goodbye, it was still warm." It wasn't until years later that he asked Father Murphy, pastor of St. Patrick's Church in Catskill, what it might have meant.

"Murphy said, 'Maybe Uncle Jackie was telling you he's still alive, and watching out for you in heaven,'" said Rooney, his voice breaking with emotion.

Those close to Rooney, those whose belief in him remains unshaken, are quick to point out that the Rooney who drinks is not someone you'd choose to be around. Rooney is not a nice guy at those times.

"Some people get funny, some people just fall asleep," Rooney said. "I get mean. I'll fight."

He recalled the time he was picked up for drunk and disorderly conduct by the NYPD, and of being placed in a cell, cursing at the arresting officers and challenging them to come in and fight. "I was

Rooney listens as Vinny Paz addresses the media following "The Pazmanian Devil's" 10-round decision over Luis Santana in 1992. Paz, who hung up his gloves in 2004, is a great admirer of Rooney's and the pair are still good friends.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL RIVEST

Rooney chats with one of the boxers he trains at Quail Street Boxing Gym. The trainer's children believe that working with fighters could be their father's road to salvation. Rooney now understands that boredom often triggered his drinking problem.

ready to kill somebody," he admitted.

This is not Rooney's first rehab placement, but his third. It might suggest that those choosing to stand by him are engaged in wishful thinking. Yet substance abuse counselors agree that unlike other areas of life, past failures of an alcoholic aren't necessarily predictive of the future.

"It's not uncommon for an alcoholic to spend 20 years trying and failing, only to suddenly wake up one morning and everything starts to change," noted Greg Spencer, a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse counselor. "Alcoholics often have to return to treatment, before finally 'getting it.' If you turn over the coin that Alcoholics Anonymous awards to folks on their anniversary dates, inscribed on the back it says, 'To Thine Own Self Be True.' The journey of recovery is unique. Nobody's looks exactly like somebody else's."

The two people in his world who have suffered most from Rooney's drinking, whose nightmare memories have earned them the right to walk away from the man for good, still call him "Dad" with disarming hopefulness. Like most children of alcoholics, K.C. and Amber, ages 23 and 25, respectively, felt the full weight of Rooney's destructive habits.

"He always drank, but things got worse after the settlement with Tyson," said K.C., a graduate of Fordham University. The settlement to which he referred was a $4.5-million breach of contract award. In 1996, a federal court jury said Tyson couldn't simply walk away with Don King and betray Rooney free of charge. "After that, my dad got real bored. He had too much free time on his hands and things got out of control."

Learning the language of sobriety, Rooney has come to understand boredom as one of his "triggers," a dangerous circumstance that can set off his disease.

"He is a very, very caring person," said K.C., "but he needs to be busy with fighters. He fights through them, I think."

But like Ulysses S. Grant, who historians report never drank when on an active campaign, Rooney never drank when training a fighter for an upcoming fight. Until the very end of his downslide in 2006, Rooney's focus on his fighters sustained him.

"Kevin and I practically lived together for years, first in Catskill, then in Rhode Island," said Paz. "He never, ever drank in the months before a fight, ever."

Amber reveals an understanding of her father that transcends the hurt and reflects her psychology degree from New York University. "My dad has spent his whole life fighting. Boxing for him is about releasing emotions that we all have, but for him it's so much more intense because of what he went through as a child."

For Amber, her father lives inside the metaphor. "He knows better than anyone that life can be like a boxing ring. You can't just get out because things get hard. I think that's what touches people about boxing. It reaches those core emotions."

Amber isn't the first to suggest that boxing connects with something deep within, and if she's right, what happens to Kevin Rooney from here on should matter to us. He is a hero in a sport where people get back up for a living. Many believe Kevin Rooney will rise again. He is, after all, a fighter. ■

Michael Rivest is a freelance boxing writer, referee, and judge.

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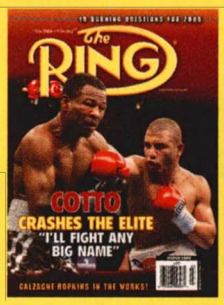

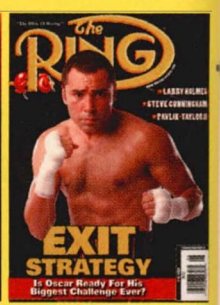

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THE BEST ERAS IN BOXING HISTORY

By Gavin Evans

Strength and weakness come in historical waves where boxing is concerned. A star arrives, cleans up, perhaps unifying the title, and then loses or moves up or retires, and there's a slump.

That's how it has worked throughout history. Therefore, it's best not to get too complacent about, say, the current glowing state of the welterweights, or too despairing about the dire state of the heavyweights. Things can only get worse or better.

To help you see things this way, we'll play devil's advocate …

First, the welterweights. True the array of talent is dazzling and there's been tremendous action in recent years, but there's also one big caveat: The top man has yet to fight anyone among THE RING's top five contenders, which is not a criticism you could make of the elite in the Leonard-Duran-Hearns era or the Gavilan-Basilio-DeMarco era.

While Miguel Cotto, Antonio Margarito, and Shane Mosley are happy to fight each other, welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather does business elsewhere—and not very often. In fact, the only man he's fought in THE RING's current top 10 is Zab Judah.

Beating up junior welterweight Ricky Hatton and going over old ground with Oscar De La Hoya, or playing with wrestlers might be the most lucrative options, but they sure as hell don't measure up to tangling with Cotto.

Next, the heavyweights: Yes, the title is divided, although with Wladimir Klitchko's win over Sultan Ibragimov and Sam Peter's over Oleg Maskaev, a five-part divide has been cut to three. Yes, the top man is over-cautious, over-cerebral, and chinny, but also big, athletic, skillful, heavy-handed, and great at controlling range and tempo. Yes, the list of contenders could be more exciting, even if they're a long way from the bottom of the historical barrel. And yes, there's no Tyson on the horizon, but watch out for David Haye and Alexander Povetkin.

But is it really fair to attack them merely for being European? While Klitschko, Chagaev, Valuev, and the rest may not be household names in the U.S. heartlands, they are in Eastern Europe and Germany. And remember, the last sustained spell of American beltholders included names like Page, Tubbs, Weaver, Dokes, Witherspoon, Thomas, Tucker, Smith, Seldon—legends all.

And one last point: Inadequate as he may be, can you really be sure Klitschko would have been beyond hope against even the best of his predecessors? Think about it.

Point is that it takes a bit of time to assess what is really the best and worst in heavyweight history or any other division. But that's exactly what we will be attempting to do on the following pages, where we rate the best and worst eras in 10 divisions.

HEAVYWEIGHT

Best of Times: 1970-1980

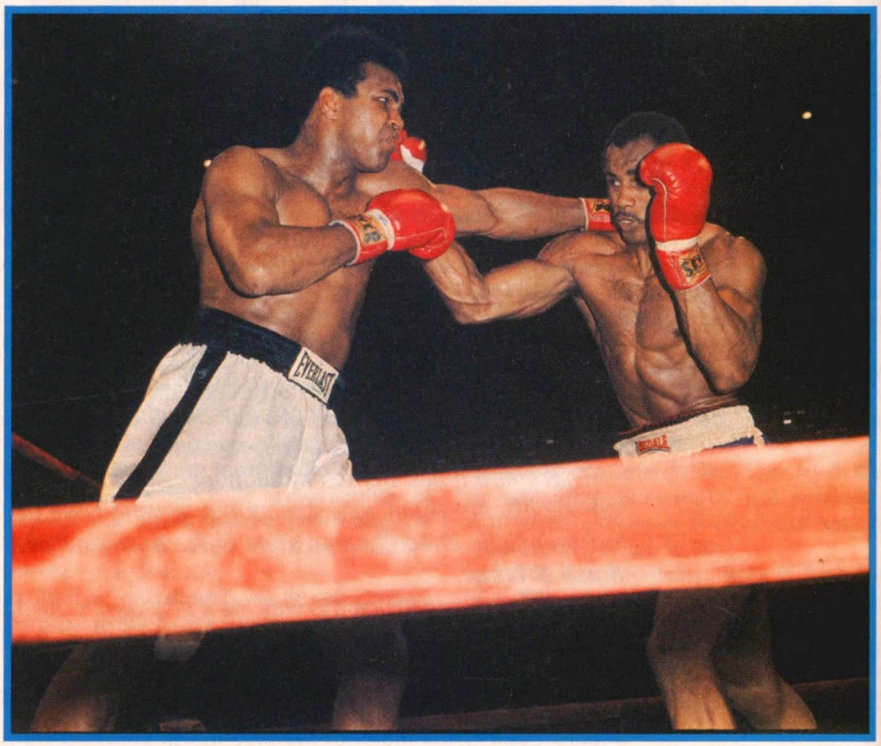
Four considerations make this the golden age for boxing's premier division: the quality of the champions (Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, Larry Holmes), the fact that for most of this spell the title was unified, the quality of the leading contenders (Ken Norton, Earnie Shavers, Jerry Quarry, Ron Lyle, Jimmy Young, Floyd Patterson, Jimmy Ellis, Oscar Bonavena), and, most important, the number of magnificent, historically resonant fights.

It began in 1970 with Ali's return after 3½ years of politically enforced exile, and he didn't mess around. His first two outings saw him stopping leading contenders Quarry and Bonavena before stepping in with the peak Frazier in the "Fight Of The Century" in 1971—an event that transcended boxing and transcended sport.

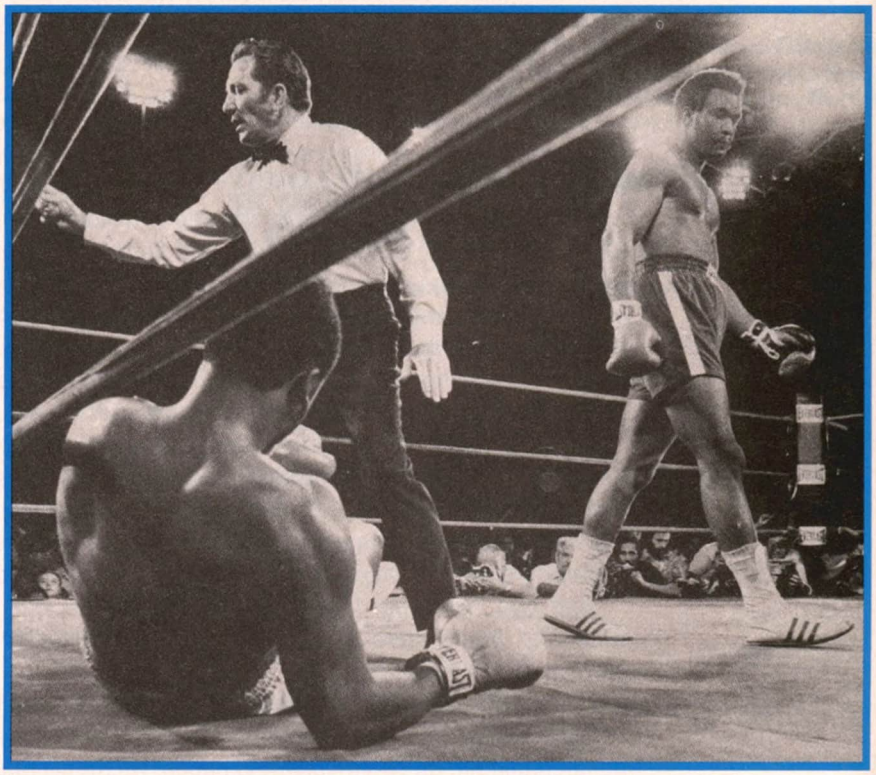
Frazier, who'd won the vacant title earlier that year by stopping rival claimant Ellis in five, consolidated his hold with a unanimous decision over Ali, punctuating it with a final-round knockdown to crown an event that lived up to its massive hype. But over the next two years, it was Ali who did all the heavy lifting, while "Smokin' Joe" avoided a return, instead accommodating two of the most inept challengers in boxing history, Terry Daniels and Ron Stander. Not a good stretch for the title, but the division was still in a state of robust health because Ali kept it moving with 10 wins in 19 months, most against top contenders.

And then, rather suddenly, it all changed. Norton broke Ali's jaw on his way to a points win and Foreman demolished Frazier, bouncing him around the ring on his way to a two-round, six-knockdown victory.

But Ali still had several more surprises. He squeaked past Norton, and then, more decisively, avenged his loss against Frazier, and followed



Ali avenges loss to Norton



Foreman destroys Frazier

that with what seemed like a magical feat, not only beating Foreman, but also knocking him out. Among all the wonderful precedents set by Ali's astonishing eighth-round victory in the October 1974 "Rumble In The Jungle" is this one: It was the first time an all-time top-10 world heavyweight champion had been beaten by another, at the peak of the loser's powers.

And there was far more to come. After seeing off another three challengers, including the formidable Lyle, Ali fought a rubber match with Frazier, and did most of his training with his mistress in his bedroom, assuming that his old rival was shot. The result was perhaps the greatest fight in heavyweight history, the "Thrilla In Manila," with Ali prevailing via 15th-round TKO in the extreme heat and humidity. Neither man was the same again.

Somehow, the damaged Ali managed six more successful defenses, but in three of them, against Young, Norton, and Shavers, he was fortunate to get the nod. He finally lost the crown to seven-fight novice Leon Spinks, regained it, and retired, after which the title was parceled out again.

While all this was happening, there was memorable action among the contenders. Foreman returned to prevail in a magnificent brawl with Lyle, before ending Frazier's career, only to lose widely to the light-fisted but highly skilled Young, who'd twice beaten Lyle. Norton returned to blow away Quarry and Duane Bobick before gaining WBC recognition after edging past Young.

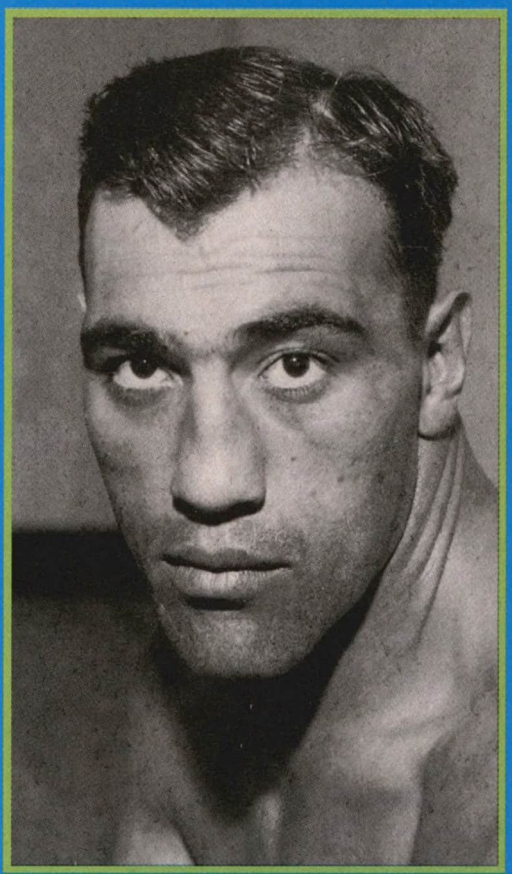
And then, best of all, Larry Holmes arrived and gradually took over. In March '78, he won every minute of every round against a peak Shavers, and then, fighting with a shoulder injury, outpointed Norton in another of the great fights in heavyweight history. Holmes proved to be an exemplary champion, perhaps the finest heavyweight of the decade (bearing in mind that Ali's peak was in the '60s).

Holmes climbed off the floor to beat Shavers again, did the same with Renaldo Snipes, and then ended the decade and the era on a sadder note, by becoming the first man to stop a shadow of Ali. Holmes remained champion for another five years, and pulled off some valiant triumphs, not least against the rampant Gerry Cooney. But attempts to reunify the title failed, and instead it subdivided again, leading to one of the most-dire spells in heavyweight history.

But while it lasted, this 10-year run was a great deal of fun for fight fans, with no let-up in the action, just one magnificent fight after another. There have been other good spells for the heavyweight division, some involving several memorable fights (the 1920s); others involving outstanding fighters (the 1990s), but none have involved that unique combination of great champions, outstanding contenders, and great fights.

Worst of Times: 1928-1937

Think it's bad today? Go back 80 years when there was no champion for 23 months, and it went downhill from there. The erratic Jack Sharkey outboxed Max Schmeling until he went low, and Max became champion on a foul. The German managed a single defense in two years before accommodating Sharkey. This time, after a horrible snoozer, Schmeling seemed a clear winner, but the verdict went the other way.



Primo Carnera

Sharkey lost to his former victim, Primo Carnera, who'd won several fixed fights, but still managed to lose three in the previous 20 months. Max Baer seemed like a savior when he relieved Carnera of the title, but lost it to blown-up light heavy Jimmy Braddock, who had 25 defeats on his tally. "The Cinderella Man" kept the title on ice for two years, meaning that in nine years the total number of world heavyweight title fights was eight.

When Joe Louis rode to the rescue, Jack Dempsey staged a "White Hope" tournament to find a Caucasian to beat the "Brown Bomber," and when Schmeling pulled it off, Dempsey declared this "the finest thing to happen in boxing for a long time."

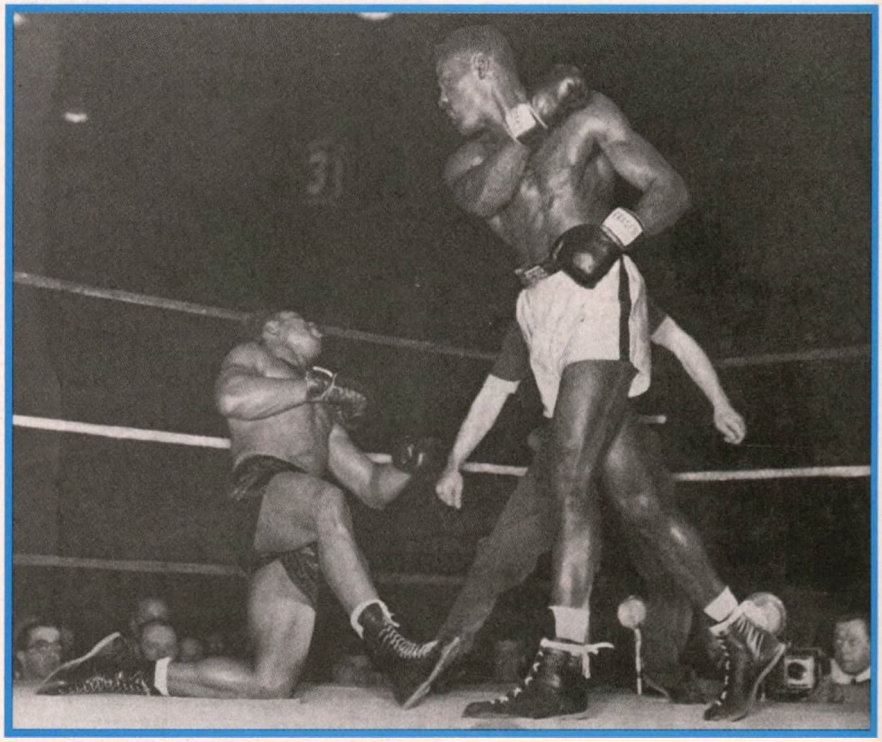
Meanwhile, leading black contenders like Larry Gains (who'd beaten Schmeling and Carnera) and George Godfrey were frozen out.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

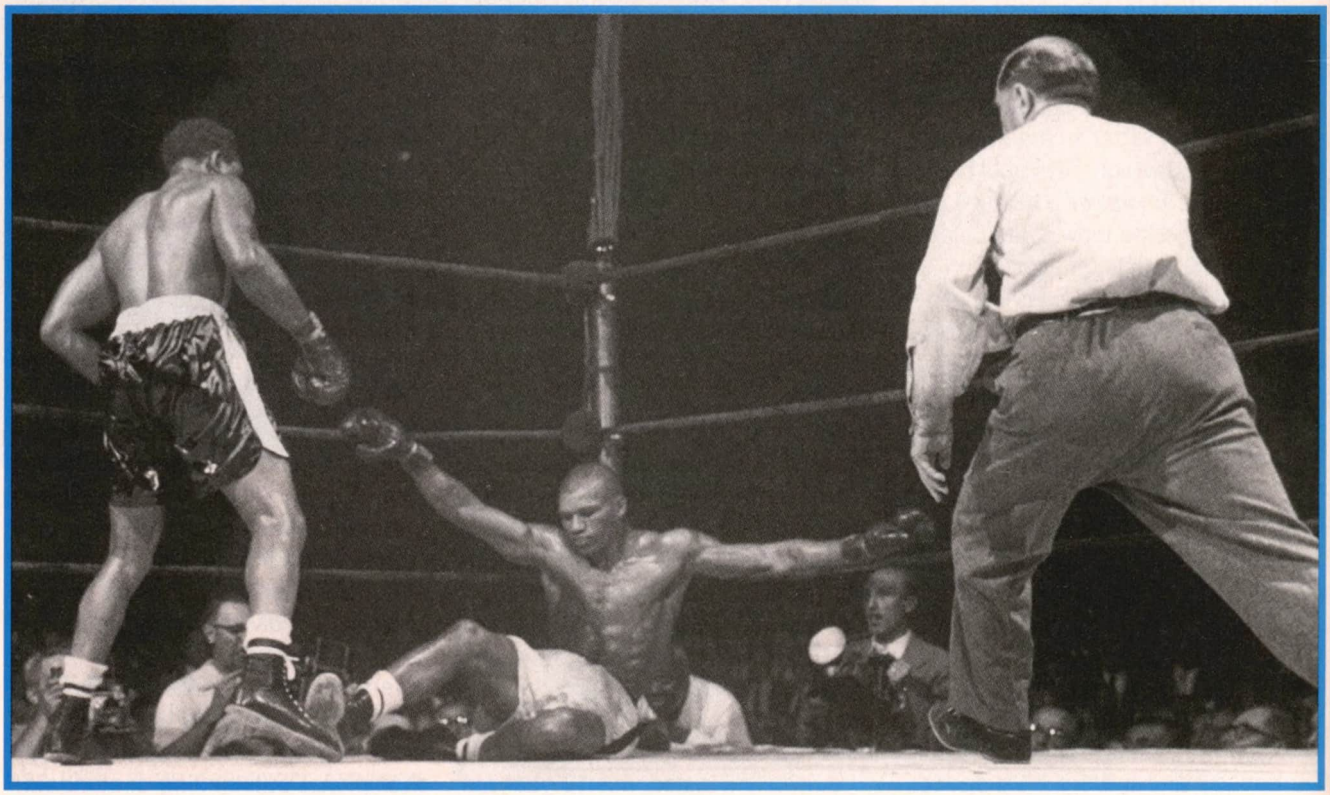
Best of Times: 1948-1958

It began with the signature performance by the greatest light heavy of them all, Ezzard Charles, whose flashing fists put Archie Moore to sleep in eight. But at 175-pounds, the era belonged to the loser, "The Old Mongoose" bestriding over it like a colossus, and it ended, fittingly, with his most thrilling triumph, when Moore picked himself off the canvas four times to overcome the relentless Yvonne Durelle.

Charles' final year at light heavyweight was '48, and he marked it emphatically against his old foe. Twice before he'd dropped and outpointed Moore, but Archie was on a good run and had reached his formidable peak. They fought at a frantic pace, but Charles was that much better and led after seven rounds. Then in the eighth, Moore landed a monstrous left hook and went for the kill, only to find Charles springing to life and drilling him with a perfect right cross that put Archie down for the full count.



Charles puts Moore to sleep



Moore Flattens Johnson

During his prime (1946-'51), Charles had 10 fights against world light heavyweight champions and won the lot with plenty to spare. In fact, in 40 bouts in this period he lost just once, an outrageously unjust split decision against top heavyweight contender Elmer Ray, who outweighed him by 20 pounds.

In the rematch, Charles flattened Ray in nine. However, five weeks after stopping Moore, Charles' punches killed Sam Baroudi. From then on, he fought exclusively at heavyweight, sometimes weighing less than 180 pounds, winning the world title in '49 and successfully defending it eight times.

Meanwhile, in March '48, Gus Lesnevich made his final successful defense of the world light heavy title, knocking out the mob-backed Billy Fox in one, before fighting a return with the rough Englishman Freddie Mills, whom he'd previously stopped. This time, the all-action Mills delighted the London crowd by dropping Lesnevich twice and bloodying him to lift the crown. Seventeen months later, Lesnevich had his final fight, a seventh-round battering at the hands of Charles. In January 1950, Joey Maxim won the title in his 88th bout by knocking out Mills in 10. In a 23-fight run, between 1948 and 1952, the only man to beat Maxim was Charles.

One of the strangest fights in light heavyweight history took place at New York's Yankee Stadium in June '52. The 157-pound middleweight champion, Ray Robinson, handily outboxed the 173-pound Maxim in 104-degree heat. After 12 rounds, Maxim had only won three (on all three judges' cards), but in the 13th, the dehydrated Robinson wilted in the heat and fell face down at Maxim's feet. He could not come out for the next round, and Maxim retained the title.

After this lucky escape, Maxim finally accommodated Moore, who'd been the world's number one for four years. The cute, hard-hitting, energy-preserving challenger won a wide, unanimous decision to become champion after 17 years as a pro. At the age of 36 (or 39 by some estimates), it was thought his best days were behind him, but he boxed on for another decade and remained champion for eight years, making nine defenses. In this 59-bout run, he was never beaten at light heavy.

One of his toughest assignments came against the superbly skilled Harold Johnson in '54 (they'd previously fought three times, with Moore winning twice). Johnson, who was on a brilliant streak that included wins over Charles, Nino Valdes, and Bob Satterfield, dropped Moore in the 10th round, but the heavy-handed champion had more in the tank and knocked out Johnson in the 14th.

"Ancient Archie" was at least 42 when he took on the Canadian Durelle in December 1958, and looked on his way to certain defeat, dropped three times in the first round and again in the fourth. But somehow he survived, worked his way back, and dropped Durelle twice and then twice more in the 11th round to retain his crown in what some ringsiders considered the greatest fight of all-time.

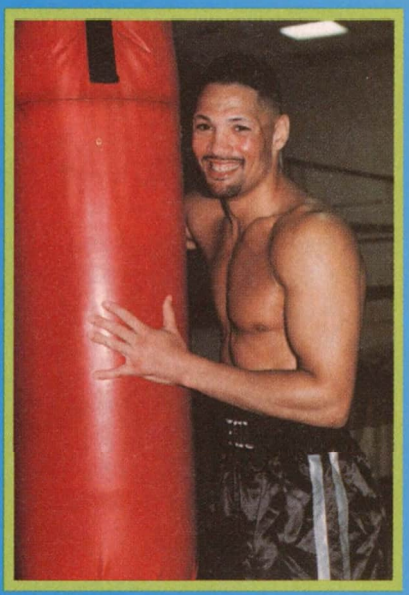
Another outstanding fighter from that era was less fortunate. Lloyd Marshall, who knocked out Mills shortly before the Englishman won the title and had previously beaten several of the world's best middleweights and light heavyweights (Charles, Charley Burley, Holman Williams, Jake LaMotta, Teddy Yarosz, Ken Overlin, Anton Christofordis), eventually retired in '51 without ever being offered a title shot at either weight.

At the end of the decade, the division lost its momentum. The National Boxing Association stripped Moore for inactivity and then the New York Commission did the same, and it was only in '62 that Johnson cleared up the mess to become unified world champion.

Worst of Times: 1985-1995

Bad periods are invariably wedged between good ones, and vice-versa. So it was with the light heavies in the 1980s and '90s. When Michael Spinks moved up to heavyweight after unifying the title, it became splintered once again, and remained that way until Roy Jones put the pieces together.

There were some good fighters (Virgil Hill in particular put in solid service) and some exciting events (Tommy Hearns' surprise victory over Hill stands out), but for the most part, it was marred by meaningless fights between B-list titlists.



Virgil Hill

Let's try to make this simple: The WBC line went from J.B. Williamson to Dennis Andries to Hearns, who vacated. Donny Lalonde took the tarnished belt, but ceded it to Ray Leonard (in a bout set at 168-pounds so two titles could be on the line), who promptly vacated. Back to Andries, Jeff Harding, and Andries again. Next it was Harding again, then on to Fabrice Tiozzo, and total confusion after being vacated again. The WBA line went from Marvin Johnson to Leslie Stewart to Virgil Hill to Hearns to Iran Barkley, only to be vacated and regained by Hill. The IBF version went from Bobby Czyz to Prince Charles Williams to Henry Maske to Hill.

Get it? Thought not.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1946-1958

This long span features the peak middleweight years of some of the finest and most exciting fighters of all-time, along with a several of the most thrilling fights, possibly the best era in boxing history for any division.

It begins with the brutally intense three-fight series from 1946-'48 between Tony Zale and Rocky Graziano. First, "The Man Of Steel" came back from the brink of defeat to prevail. Next, Rocky came back from the brink of defeat to prevail, and then Zale won the third. The first two of these wonderful wars were THE RING's Fights of the Year.

Basilio and Robinson split a pair of wars

While this was happening, the outstanding French-Algerian, Marcel Cerdan, was racking up a phenomenal record. His 1946 wins over top Americans Holman Williams and Georgie Abrams were particularly impressive. The 32-year-old Cerdan challenged the 35-year-old Zale, and this time the younger man proved too strong and relentless, battering the American until he could not make it out for the 13th round in THE RING's Fight of the Year for '48.

Cerdan dislocated his shoulder after slipping in the opening round of a defense against Jake LaMotta and was forced to surrender in the 10th. Flying back for the rematch, Cerdan was killed in a plane crash. In LaMotta's second title defense, he faced another Frenchman, Laurent Dauthuille, who'd previously beaten him. Coming into the 15th round, Dauthuille was way ahead, but the "Raging Bull" played possum and then sprung, knocking the Frenchman out with just 13 seconds to go in THE RING's Fight of the Year for '50.

Zale zaps Graziano with a right

The year 1950 also saw the retirement of one of the finest middleweights and welterweights of all-time, Charley Burley. Despite victories over Archie Moore, Holman Williams, Billy Soose, Fritzie Zivic, and Cocoa Kid, among many others, he was never granted a title shot at either weight.

One of those accused of avoiding Burley was Sugar Ray Robinson, who began fighting leading middleweights several years before winning the world welterweight title in '46. One of those he'd beaten (four times, against one loss) was LaMotta, with Robinson giving away as much as 16 pounds in these encounters. Sugar Ray vacated the welterweight crown, and after a six month, 10-victory middleweight campaign, challenged LaMotta for the title. For 10 rounds they fought on fairly even terms in a tremendous fight, but after that Sugar Ray took over, hammering LaMotta to a standstill in the 13th.

The flamboyant Robinson took his entourage to Europe, fighting seven times in six weeks. Exhausted and down to 154 pounds, he was soundly outboxed by Britain's Randy Turpin. Two months later, in March 1952, they fought a return in New York. After nine even rounds, a badly cut Robinson exploded, dropping Turpin with a right cross and then battering him to defeat in the closing seconds of the 10th round.

The second defense of his second reign saw Robinson up against a resurgent Rocky Graziano, who was unbeaten in 21 fights since losing his third fight with Zale. Robinson rose from a third-round knockdown to flatten Rocky. Following his loss to light heavy champ Maxim, Robinson retired. But faced with financial troubles, he returned 2½ years later. In the interim, Carl "Bobo" Olson, who had twice succumbed to Robinson, proved a capable world champion, but in December '55 he once again fell to Sugar Ray in two rounds, and then in four rounds in their fourth bout.

In the second defense of his third reign, Robinson was knocked out of the ring and mauled by Utah's younger, stronger Gene Fullmer, losing a unanimous decision. But in the return, Robinson, boxing in retreat, fired a perfect left hook to put Fullmer out for the count, perhaps the finest one-punch knockout in boxing history.

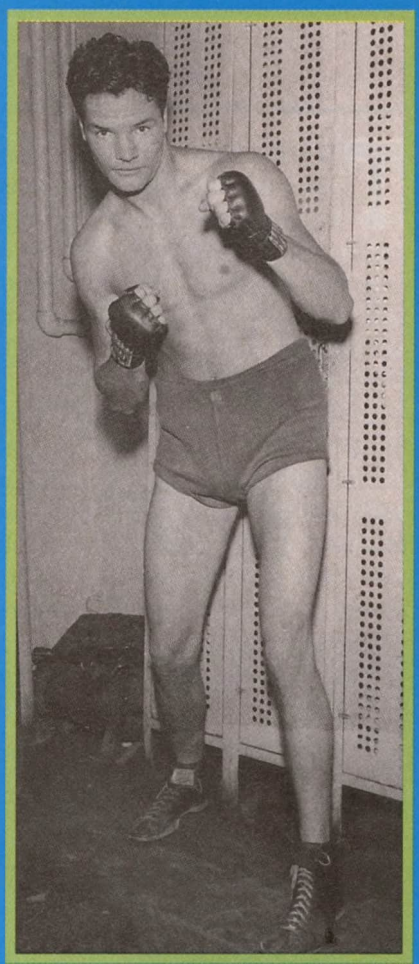
Next up were two magnificent fights between Robinson and world welterweight champion Carmen Basilio, both voted Fight of the Year by The Ring. The first, in New York's Yankee Stadium in 1957, saw a bloodied Basilio grinding out a split decision victory. Their vicious return was fought in Chicago in 1958. It began with a foul-filled opening round and saw Basilio's left eye closed and ended with Robinson winning the middleweight title for the fifth time, again on a split decision.

This effectively ended boxing's greatest middleweight era. Robinson went nearly two years without defending, finally losing via split decision defeat to Paul Pender, when he was nearly 39 years old, although he boxed on for five more years. By then, the title had been fractured and would remain so until Dick Tiger won universal recognition in 1963.

Worst of Times: 1931-1946

Based on the good times lead to bad formula, the era of Harry Greb, Tiger Flowers, and Mickey Walker was bound to be followed by something dismal: a divided title and a string of champions few can remember.

It's not that Gorilla Jones, Marcel Thil, Fred Apostoli, Ben Jeby, Lou Brouillard, Vince Dundee, Teddy Yarosz, Babe Risko, Freddie Steele, Al Hostak, Solly Krieger, Ceferino Garcia, Ken Overlin, and Billy Soose were bad fighters. It was just that nobody could recall which version of the title they held (NBA or New York) and none of them remained at the top for long enough to leave a mark. Finally, in 1941 Soose outgrew the division, and Georgie Abrams, who'd beaten Soose three times, fought NBA titlist Tony Zale. The Man of Steel rose from a knockdown to win on points and win universal recognition as world champion.



Billy Soose

But the title was frozen for four years when Zale went to war, meaning that the world's best middleweights, Ezzard Charles, Charley Burley, Lloyd Marshall, and Holman Williams, couldn't get a look-in.

It was only after the war, with the Zale-Graziano series, that the division regained its respectability.

WELTERWEIGHT

Best of times: 1979-1986

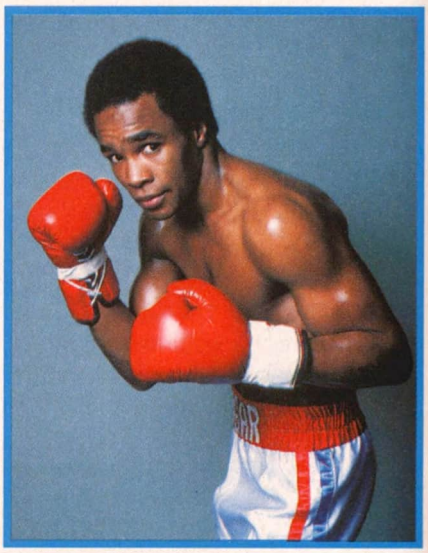
The welterweight division has enjoyed several magnificent eras, but none more so than in the 1980s, which was really two eras in one: first the Leonard, Hearns, Duran, Benitez era, followed by the satisfying aftershock of the Donald Curry era.

During the demise of Jose Napoles, the division was parceled out, and it took the arrival of a fresh batch of stars to sort it out. The process started in January '79, when a 20-year-old with radar reflexes, Wilfred Benitez, moved up in weight to win his second title by outfinessing Carlos Palomino, who was making the eighth defense of the WBC belt.

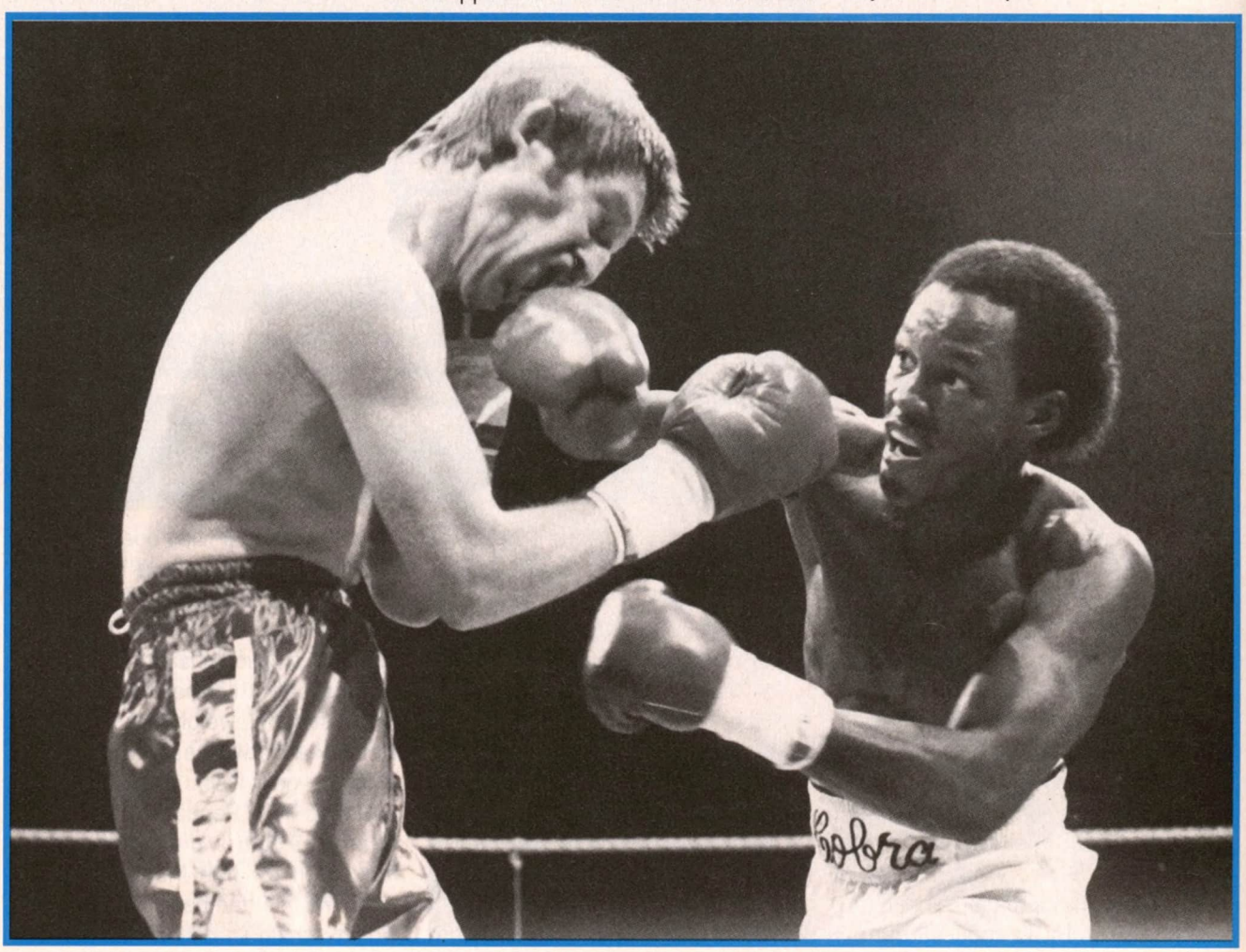
Five months later, world lightweight champion Roberto Duran, in his fourth fight at welterweight, did an even more impressive job on Palomino, winning nine out of 10 rounds.

Meanwhile, the dazzling 23-year-old Olympic gold medalist, Sugar Ray Leonard, was establishing himself as a crossover star as he worked his way through the division.

In November '79, Benitez accommodated Leonard in his second defense, and while the Puerto Rican could match the American when it came to reflexes, hand speed, and technique, there was a significant gap in power and conditioning. Leonard stopped him in the 15th round to win



Ray Leonard in his prime



Curry cracks Jones

his first title. Leonard followed that with a dazzling fourth-round knockout of Englishman Dave "Boy" Green and looked set for a long reign.

But in his second defense, in June '80, Leonard met Duran in Montreal, and instead of relying on his usual fleet-footed, in-and-out style, he was drawn into a thrilling close-quarters brawl. Duran emerged with a very close, but clear and unanimous decision by margins of one point (twice) and two points.

Duran's four months of celebration were not the ideal preparation for the rematch with the intensely focused Leonard in November. This time Sugar Ray danced and taunted until "Hands Of Stone" could take no more and, notoriously, shouted "No mas!" giving up near the end of the eighth round.

Meanwhile, the big-hitting Pipino Cuevas made his 13th defense of the WBA title, in August '80, against the 21-year-old, 6'1" Thomas Hearns, whose record stood at 28-0 (26). The bigger, quicker, harder-hitting, more-skillful Hearns demolished the Mexican hero in two rounds, teeing off with his monstrous right crosses.

Over the next year, the two title-holders consolidated the status, Hearns with three defenses, while Leonard made one, then moved up to take the WBA junior middleweight title, and dropping back down to welter again. Leonard and Hearns' September '81 unification showdown in Las Vegas was THE RING's Fight of the Year.

To everyone's surprise, Hearns turned matador and Leonard became the bull. Hearns used his superb left jab to outbox his rival, while Sugar Ray, whose left eye was closing, landed the more damaging punches, wobbling Hearns in the sixth and dominating the next two. Then Hearns regrouped, closed Leonard's eye, and took over. But in the 13th, Leonard knocked Hearns through the ropes and then dropped him again. Going into the 14th, Hearns was still ahead on points, but he was finished. Leonard poured it on to force the stoppage.

After one defense of the unified title, Leonard retired in '82 because of a detached retina, while Hearns joined Benitez and Duran in the junior middleweight division.

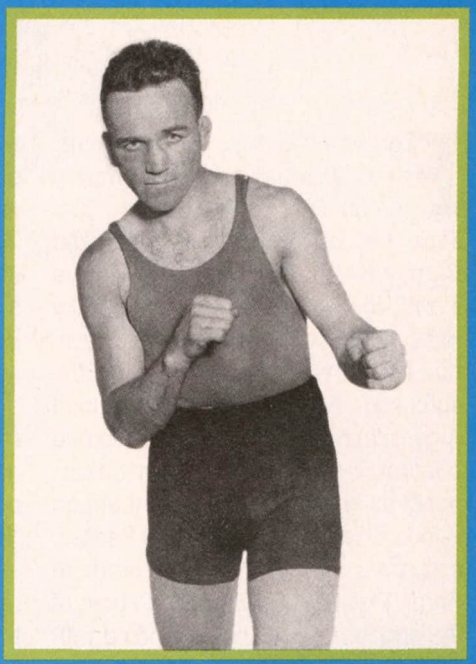
It looked like the end of a magnificent era, but the next one was already brewing. In October '82, two unbeaten contenders, Donald Curry and Marlon Starling, met, with Curry edging home via split decision. Fifteen weeks later, he lifted the vacant WBA belt, and a year after that strengthened his claim (with added recognition from the IBF) with a unanimous decision over Starling.

In December '85, after six title defenses, Curry took on WBC titlist Milton McCrory, who was unbeaten in 28 bouts. The 6'1" McCrory had come through two intense wars with big-hitting Welshman Colin Jones (a draw and a split decision win) and had made four title defenses. Curry, a tight-boxing, versatile, hard-hooking counterpuncher, had defended his pieces of the titles seven times, including a fourth-round knockout of Jones. He dominated the first round and then knocked McCrory out with a left hook in the second to unify the title.

It looked like Curry was set for an illustrious reign, but the good times soon came to an end. In a stunning upset, a weight-drained, undertrained Curry lost the belts and his 27-fight unbeaten record to Britain's Lloyd Honeyghan, and soon the title was divided again. Nobody dominated, but Starling, Mark Breland, Simon Brown, and Honeyghan emerged as the dominant forces.

Worst of times: 1908-1915

At the turn of the century, the welterweight division established itself with the emergence of several outstanding fighters, including Tommy Ryan and Barbados Joe Walcott. But in 1908, when reigning world champion Mike "Twin" Sullivan moved up to middleweight, it fell into disarray, and for more than seven years no clear champion emerged.



Mike Gibbons

The rival claimants included long-forgotten names such as Jimmy Clabby, Ray Bronson, Jimmy Gardner, Rube Ferns, and Mike Glover. But none of them stood out. The best welterweight of this era was certainly the "St. Paul Phantom," Mike Gibbons, who lost just three of his 133 fights, but he never received widespread recognition as champion, either at welterweight or middleweight (he excelled in both).

The mess was finally cleaned up when relentless, hard-hitting Londoner Ted "Kid" Lewis outpointed the leading American claimant, Jack Britton, in Boston in August 1915 to become undisputed champion. Over the next seven years, these two men shared the title between them, fighting each other 20 times.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

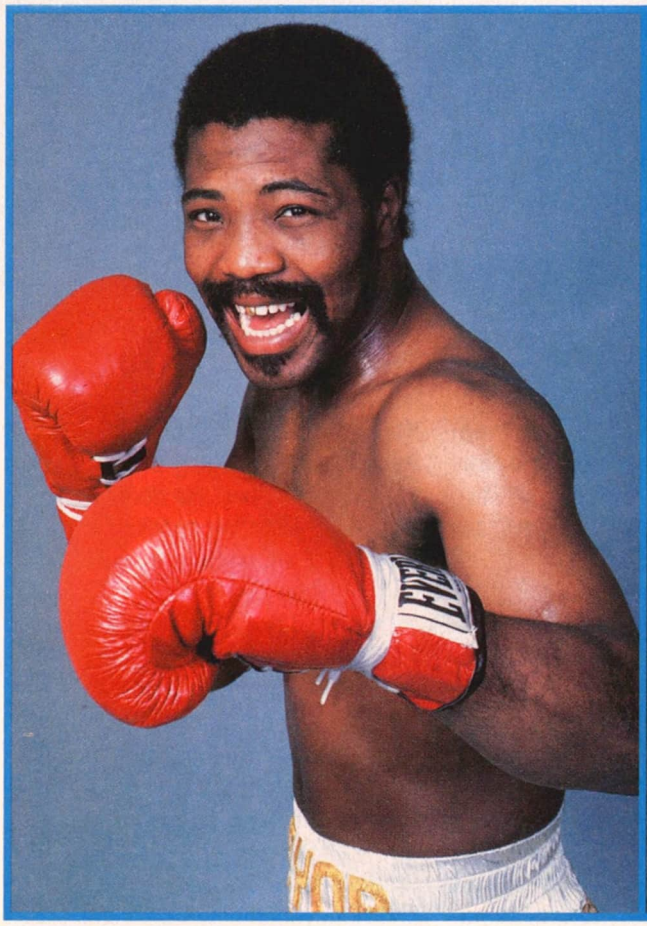
Best of Times: 1972-82

For one of boxing's minor divisions, the 140-pound class has certainly produced its share of talent, from Jack "Kid" Berg, Tony Canzoneri, and Barney Ross in the 1930s to Kostya Tszyu, Floyd Mayweather, and Ricky Hatton in the current era. But a 10 years run, from the early-'70s to early-'80s, surpasses them all. Its stars included Argentinean defensive maestro Nicolino Locche, brilliant Colombian boxer-puncher Antonio Cervantes, teenage Puerto Rican sensation Wilfred Benitez, and, best of all, mercurial American Aaron Pryor. It also delivered some of the division's finest fights, ending with the best of the lot: Pryor's 14-round war with Alexis Arguello.

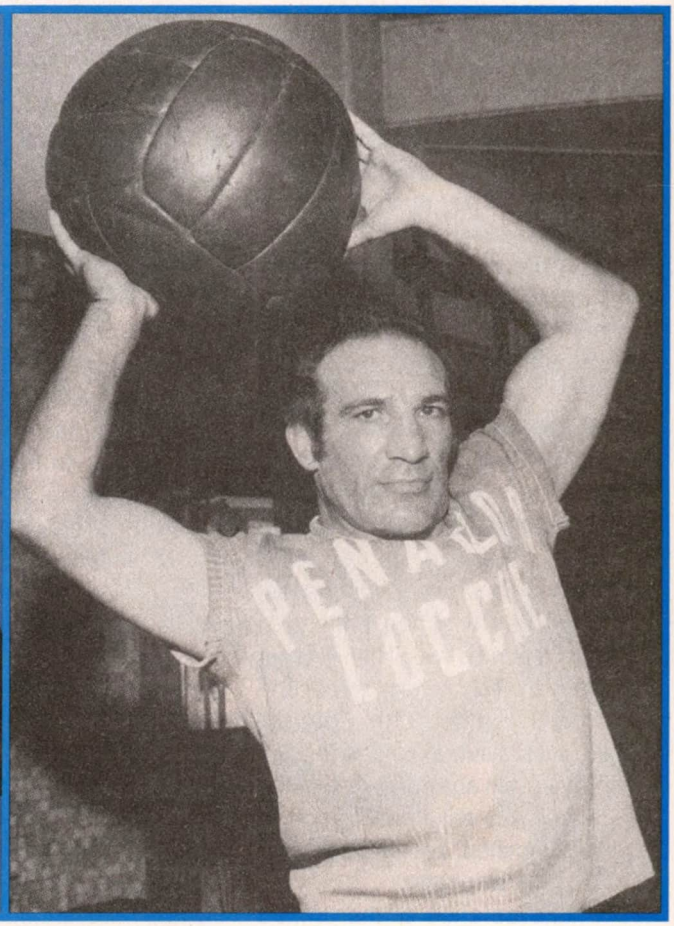
In 1972, when the light-fisted but astonishingly elusive Locche was world champion (well, officially WBA titleholder because the WBC had stripped him on spurious grounds, but THE RING recognized him and so did just about everyone else). He had reigned since 1968, building a record showing just two defeats in 122 fights, with his most recent defense a one-sided romp against Cervantes. But in March '72, the chain-smoking 32-year-old known as "The Untouchable," clearly lost on points to talented Panamanian Alfonso "Peppermint" Fraser.

Then, in October of that year, the rapidly improving Cervantes traveled to Panama to knock Fraser cold in the 10th round, beginning perhaps the finest reign in junior welterweight history. It was a sign of Cervantes' improvement as much as Locche's decline that he was able to stop the Argentinean in the 10th round in March 1973. At times, the veteran stood in front of his 27-year-old rival, effortlessly slipping combinations, but "Kid Pambele," who could box and punch with the best, patiently ground him down and began taking control, until Locche's cuts prevented him from continuing.

Locche retired, but made a comeback in '75, winning his final seven bouts. Cervantes, meanwhile, continued to improve, stopping Fraser in five in their return and going on to beat most of the best men at his weight in the world, including the outstanding Puerto Rican Esteban DeJesus, who had a win and a loss against Roberto Duran. Cervantes dropped him twice and won almost every round, but sadly, a much-



The incomparable Aaron Pryor



Defensive wizard Locche

anticipated showdown with Duran never went beyond the talking phase.

In his 10th defense, in March 1976, Cervantes dropped a split decision to another defensive genius, Wilfred Benitez, in the 17-year-old's hometown of San Juan. Benitez, who had picked up 25 wins in 2½ years as a professional, became the youngest world champion of any weight—ever. He quickly put together a trio of title defenses before moving up to take the WBC welterweight title.

Cervantes became WBA titlist for the second time, in November '77, by stopping another top Argentinean, Carlos Giminez, in six rounds. Again, he traveled the world (in all, he defended in nine countries), completely dominating his division, but in August 1980, in the seventh defense of his second reign, he came unstuck against perhaps the greatest 140-pounder of them all, Aaron Pryor. Almost 35, Cervantes was no longer the force of old. He managed to drop "The Hawk" in the first round, but was knocked out in the fourth. He won four of his remaining five fights before retiring at the age of 38 in December '83.

Until then, the 24-year-old Pryor had really been a lightweight, but after failing to secure a title fight at 135 pounds, he moved up. Despite his size disadvantage, Pryor, who had beaten Tommy Hearns as an amateur, was immensely strong, extremely quick, with excellent head movement and defensive technique, and a solid chin. But his greatest asset was his ferocious aggression and ability to throw punches non-stop for as long as it took.

His sixth title defense, in November 1982, he went against the heavy-handed Alexis Arguello, who had moved up to junior welter after holding titles at featherweight, super featherweight, and lightweight. The 30-year-old Nicaraguan was a consummate boxer and a potent puncher, particularly to the body, and he hurt Pryor several times. They battled away, toe-to-toe, in a bout later named as Fight of the Decade by THE RING. Going into the 14th round, Pryor, ahead on points and sensing that Arguello was fading, poured it on to force the stoppage.

A controversy about Pryor receiving an illegal substance from a water bottle between rounds prompted a return, but this time the fading Arguello was stopped in 10 relatively one-sided rounds. Pryor retired, changed his mind, and had two more title bouts (recognized by the IBF) before his cocaine addiction got the better of him.

The one drawback in this remarkable 10-year spell was the fact that the WBC had its own titleholders, but aside from the capable Saoul Mamby, none of them were particularly memorable.

Worst of Times: 1935-1959

Tippy Larkin

The junior welterweight division was launched in 1922 and thrived in the late-1920s and early-'30s. During that period, Jack "Kid" Berg defended nine times in 15 months, Tony Canzoneri held the title twice, and Barney Ross defended it 10 times before relinquishing in May '35.

After that, however, the division fell out of favor, and so it was that the 140-pound division was completely dormant until Tippy Larkin survived three knockdowns to outpoint Willy Joyce in April 1946. But Larkin only made one defense, and the division returned to its state of slumber for another 13 years.

It was finally revived in June 1959, when Carlos Ortiz knocked out Kenny Lane in two rounds to become world champion. In his third defense, he lost it to the outstanding Italian Duilio Loi, who held it for two years, lost it to Eddie Perkins, and then regained it, controversially, from Perkins, after which he retired.

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1930-1939

When the great Benny Leonard retired in 1925, there was bound to be a dip in fortunes for the lightweights, but this time it was hardly a plummet. Leonard was followed by the highly skilled Sammy Mandell, who reigned supreme for four years. But what was to come was even better.

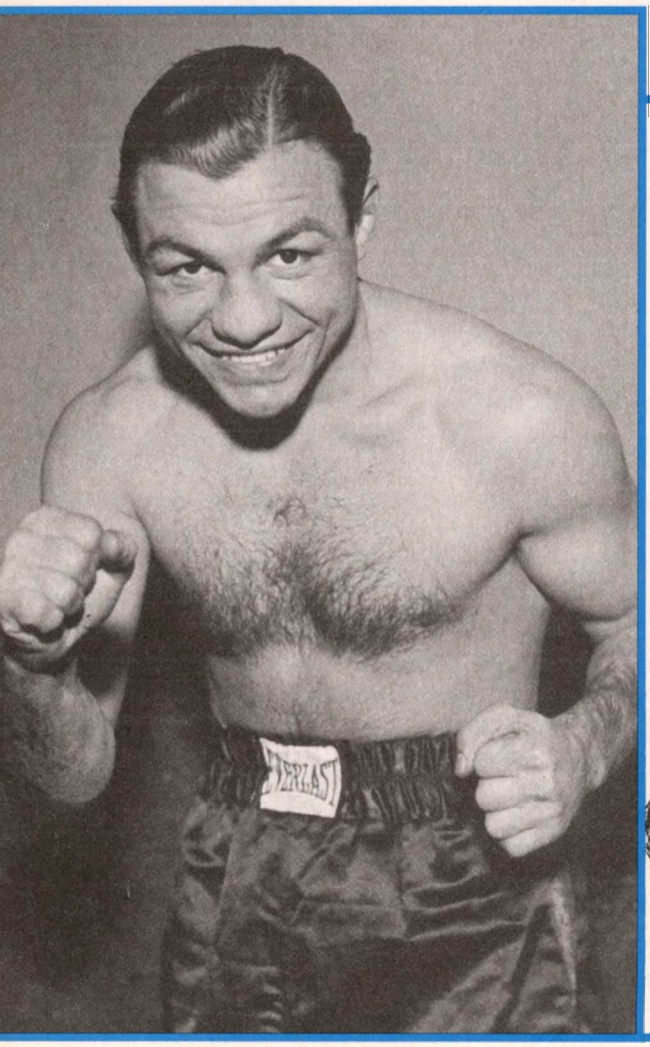
In July 1930, Al Singer pulled off a shocking upset by knocking out Mandell in the first round, and less than five months later, 22-year-old former world featherweight champion Tony Canzoneri flattened Singer in one, a left hook landing flush in his mouth, sending him down and halfway out of the ring to be counted out 66 seconds into the round. The lightweight division's most exciting decade had been launched.

What made it so special was the combination of great champions (Canzoneri, Barney Ross, Lou Ambers, Henry Armstrong), outstanding contenders (Jack "Kid" Berg, Kid Chocolate, Baby Arizmendi, Frankie Klick, Billy Petrolle, Johnny Jadick, Pedro Montanez), and some of the most riveting and closely contested fights in history.

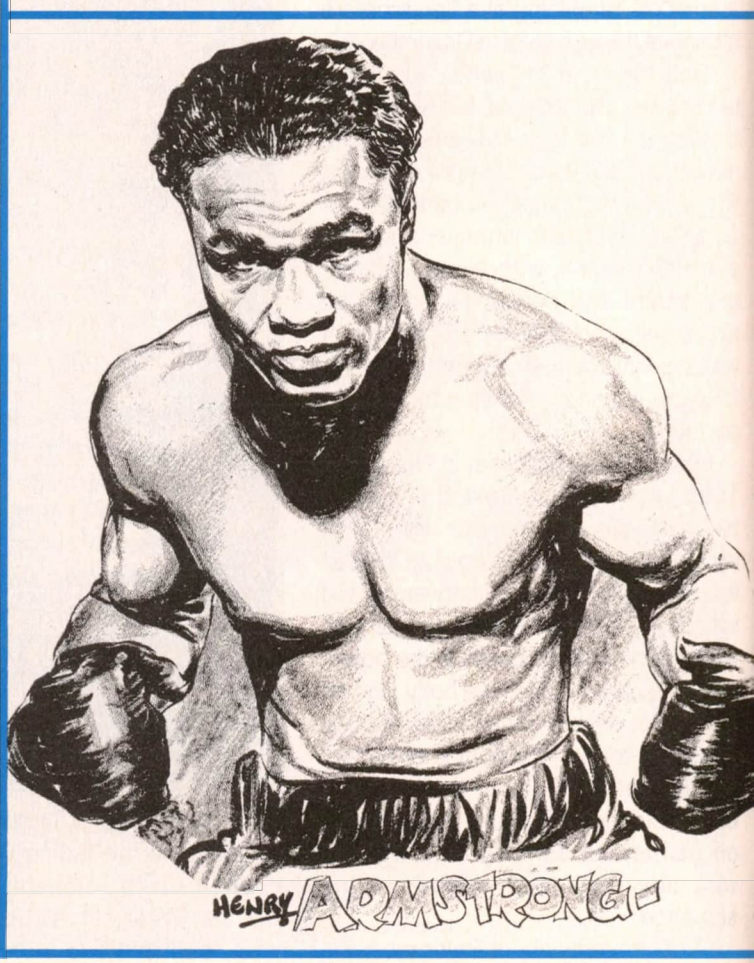
The extremely quick, elusive, and hard-hitting Canzoneri was a magnificent fighting machine who dominated the division for six years, in two title reigns. His first defense, in April 1931, saw him knock out Britain's Berg (who had previously outpointed him) in three rounds, a result that also netted him the world junior welterweight title, even though he was really a junior lightweight! He also beat Berg in a rubber match five months later.

Next, Canzoneri defended against world junior lightweight champion Chocolate in what ringsiders called the greatest fight in the division's history, with Canzoneri edging a split decision.

Canzoneri then won an easy 15-round decision over another fighter who'd previously bested him,



Canzoneri was a magnificent fighting machine



Armstrong dropped down from welter to win lightweight title

Petrolle. United Press International reported that Canzoneri was "squarely at his peak: a Canzoneri so magnificently conditioned, so beautifully attuned that even ringside old-timers admitted he was worthy to stand alongside the lightweight giants of the past."

The next outstanding lightweight to emerge was the extraordinarily tough and highly skilled 23-year-old Chicago fighter, Barney Ross, who had lost just two of his 50 fights. The 5'7" Ross edged Canzoneri on a majority decision in June '33, and three months later repeated the trick via split decision. Both fights were action packed and both wins were disputed.

But Ross soon moved up to win the world welterweight title, and Canzoneri twice dropped another lightweight great, Lou Ambers, on his way to a 15-round points win, to regain the title in May '35. But in his second defense, after outpointing former welterweight champion Jimmy McLarnin, he lost the title to Ambers and then was decisively beaten in the rubber match. After 152 fights, it was clear that Canzoneri was in decline, although he boxed on for almost three more years, retiring at the end of 1939, a few days before his 31st birthday.

The busy, two-year reign of Ambers came to an end in another of the wonderful fights of the decade. The mercurial Henry Armstrong, the world welterweight champion and former featherweight champion, beat Ambers in a bloody 15-round battle. Armstrong survived a severely gashed mouth to swarm all over the lightweight champion, throwing punches non-stop, although Ambers kept fighting back. It seemed like a clear win for "Hammerin' Hank," but he was penalized four points for low blows, and had to settle for a split decision win.

Over the next year, both men were extremely busy and undefeated. Ambers had nine wins in this period, while Armstrong made seven defenses of the welterweight title, including one when his lightweight title was also on the line (and in all of those bouts, he weighed within the lightweight limit). Armstrong and Ambers' rousing rematch took place in New York's Yankee Stadium in August '39, and this time Armstrong was unjustly deducted five points for low blows, meaning that he lost a decision he should have won. As *The New York Times* commented: "Armstrong was the victim of an injustice." After this, Armstrong abandoned the lightweight division.

Ambers was never quite the same after this battle, and nine months later he was knocked out in three rounds by the wild and undisciplined Lew Jenkins, getting dropped four times. Ambers also lost the return with Jenkins and retired in 1941.

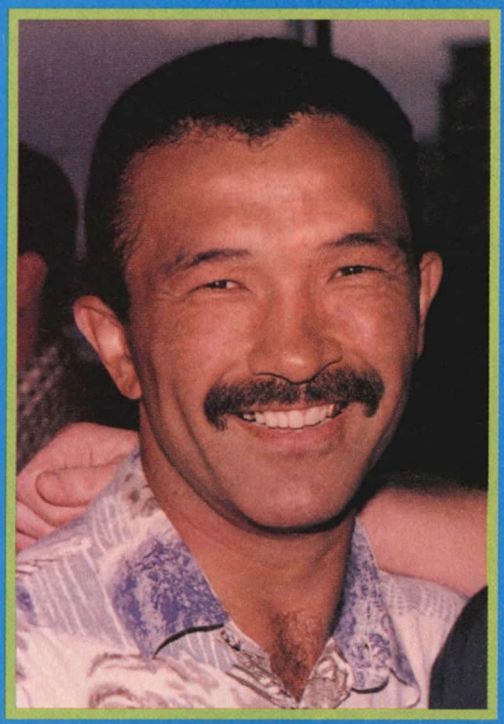
The division then descended into one of its weaker phases, with the title divided until Ike Williams took over after the World War II.

Worst of Times: 1991-1995

You'll search in vain for a lightweight period that could properly be described as dreadful, but some periods could pass as relatively mediocre.

In 1991, Pernell Whitaker made the final defense of the world title he'd unified and moved up in weight, and the expected happened: The title was splintered once again without anyone dominating.

The WBA version was won by Joey Gamache, whose four-month reign was ended by another former junior lightweight titlist, Tony Lopez, who scraped through on a hometown robbery against South Africa's Dingaan Thobela, and then lost the return. But Thobela effectively partied himself out of the title, losing it in his first defense to Kyrgyzstan's Orzubek Nazarov, who remained at his post for over four years but never rose from obscurity.



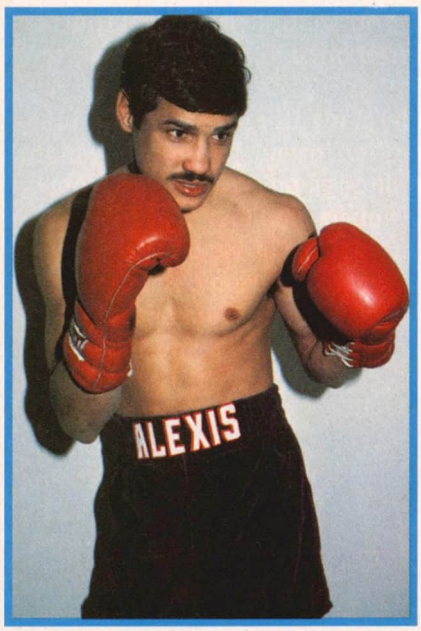
Orzubek Nazarov

The three-year reign of WBC titlist Miguel Angel Gonzalez was solid, respectable, and unspectacular, ending when he moved to junior welterweight. And the IBF version went to one of Whitaker's victims, Freddie Pendleton, who lost it in his second defense, to Rafael Ruelas.

But help was on its way. In June '95, Oscar De La Hoya, established himself as the division's top man by stopping Ruelas in two rounds. Soon after, Sugar Shane Mosley arrived and put together eight IBF title defenses.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1978-1983

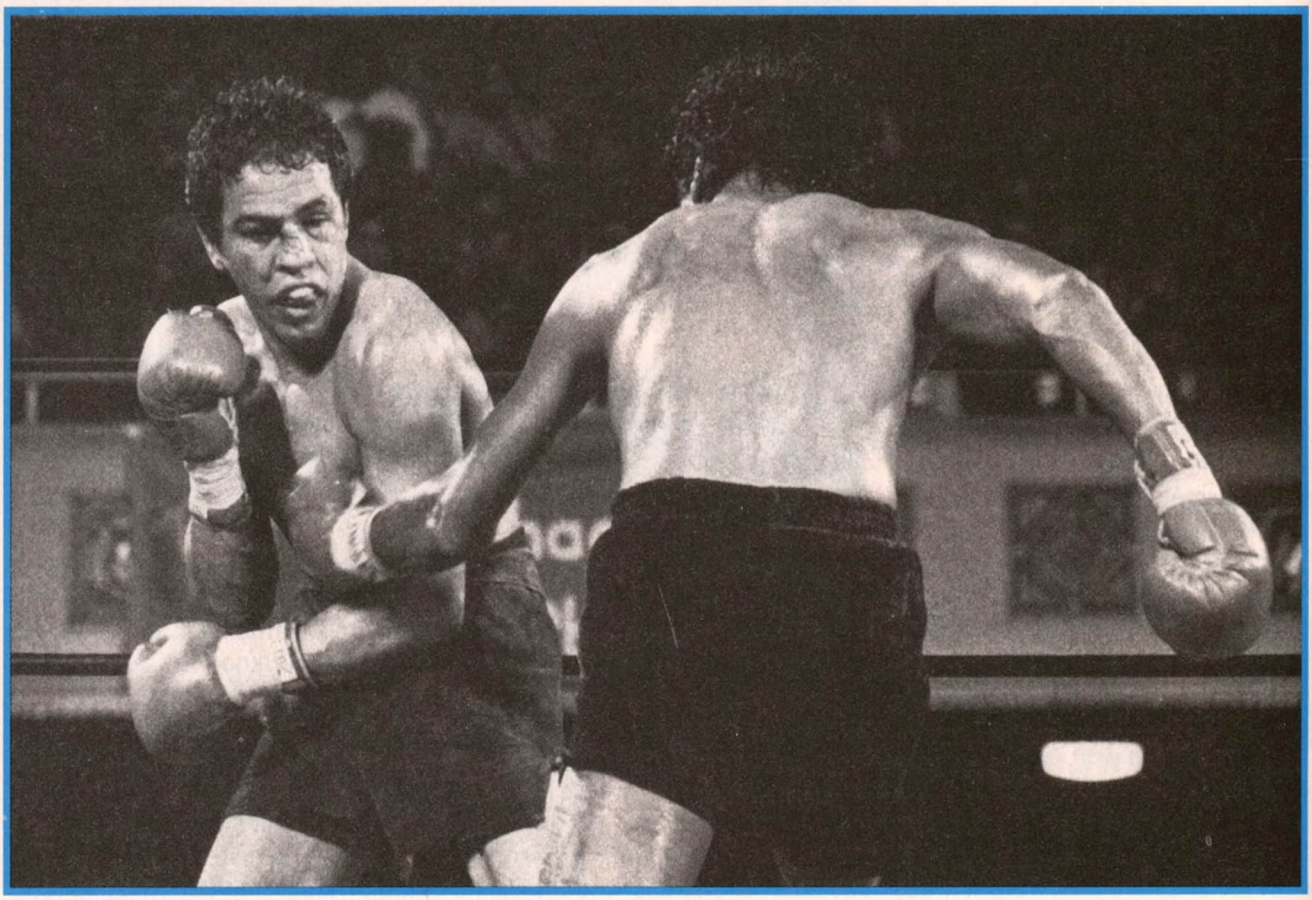


Arguello might have been at his best as junior lightweight

For many years, junior lightweight tended to be thought of as a stopover point for big featherweights or little lightweights, even though outstanding fighters such as Benny Bass, Kid Chocolate, Sandy Saddler, and Flash Elorde fought at the weight. But in the late-1970s, it began to acquire gravitas, and then, at the end of the decade, it became boxing's most exciting division, producing a steady stream of THE RING's Fights of the Year.

This golden age really got going in January 1978 when former WBA featherweight titlist Alexis Arguello ended the productive reign of Alfredo Escalera, stopping him in the 13th round of a brutal punchout to win the WBC belt, in what was dubbed "The Bloody Battle Of Bayamon." A year later, they fought a rematch, another magnificent but savage fight in which Arguello suffered several cuts later requiring plastic surgery. Escalera suffered even more severe facial damage—a broken nose, badly bloodied mouth, as well as severely lacerated and bruised eyes. Even so, the former titleholder kept fighting back and was rallying when knocked out in round 13.

Arguello was probably at his peak at 130 pounds. In his three years as WBC beltholder, he beat most of the best men available, including America's Bobby Chacon, Mexico's Rafael "Bazooka" Limon, Filipino Rolando Navarette, and Uganda's Cornelius Boza-Edwards. But the fun didn't end when he moved up to lightweight in '81, because Arguello's victims put on a series of bouts rated among the most awe-inspiring in boxing history.



Limon digs to Chacon's body

Limon got in first, winning the vacant WBC belt by stopping Venezuela's Idelfonso Bethelmy in the 15th round after an exhilarating fight in Los Angeles in December '80. His first defense was against Boza-Edwards, a fellow southpaw who outboxed and outpunched him to win a clear-cut unanimous decision. Then Boza-Edwards took on Chacon, beating him to a standstill in another all-out war, forcing the courageous little Californian to retire in his corner after 14 rounds.

But things were just warming up. In a significant upset in Toscana, Italy, in August '81, Navarette knocked out Boza-Edwards in the fifth round. In his first defense, a suspiciously early bell controversially saved the Filipino southpaw after being dropped heavily in round five by Korea's Chung Il Choi. Nonetheless, Navarette fought his way back, knocked down Choi in the 10th, and knocked him out in the 11th.

In his second defense, Navarette took on Limon, who trained like never before or since, and stood up to a sustained assault. Going into round 12, Limon was behind on all three cards, but came back to stop the Filipino at the end of the round. In his next fight, against Choi, he again came from way behind to win in the seventh.

Limon and Chacon had already fought three times, with Limon edging their first encounter in '75, the second declared a technical draw after Limon was ruled out because of a head clash, and the American controversially taking a split decision in their third fight.

Limon's fourth fight with Chacon, in Sacramento in December '82, was the best of the lot—a breathtaking struggle between two men who despised each other and fought with an insatiable desire to prevail. Limon dropped Chacon in the third and 10th rounds, but Chacon never stopped coming, and in the dying seconds of the 15th round, he dropped his rival. The bell saved Limon, and Chacon won a split decision by margins of 142-141, 141-140 and 141-143. It was THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1982.

Six months later, Chacon defended against Boza-Edwards and again seemed destined for defeat after going down in the opening round and then suffering a severe cut. But his body attack proved decisive and he worked his way back, dropping the tall Ugandan in the 12th round to edge a close, unanimous decision in THE RING's Fight of the Year for 1983.

It is worth mentioning that while all this was happening, Puerto Rico's Sammy Serrano was putting in good service in defense of the WBA belt he'd won from Ben Villaflor in 1976, tallying 12 successful defenses in two title reigns that lasted until 1983.

After this the junior lightweights had a wobble. The WBA belt was passed around until Brian Mitchell arrived to consolidate. The IBF was formed during this time, but for several years failed to find a worthy titleholder. Meanwhile, Chacon was stripped of his WBC belt for refusing to fight Hector Camacho, who won it and moved up.

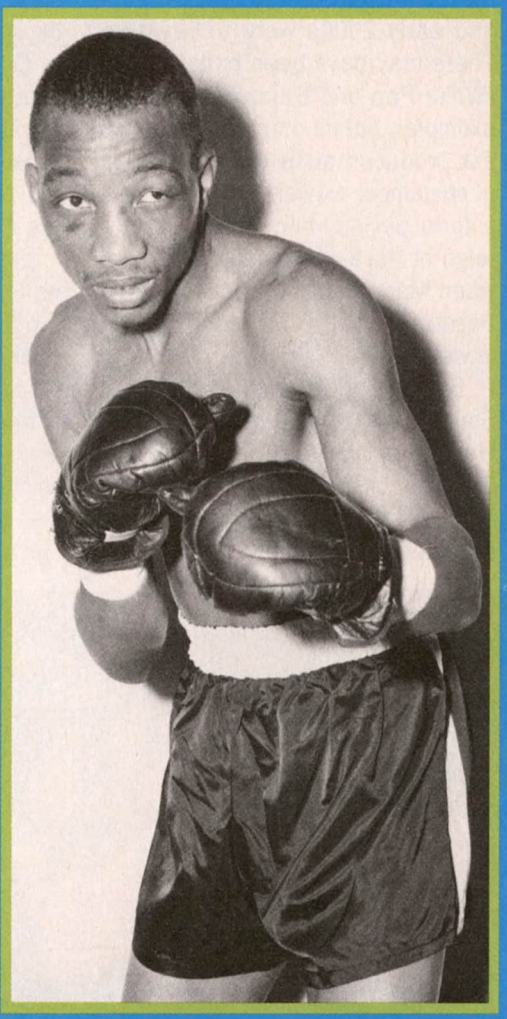
Worst of Times: 1934-1959

In the early-1930s, the junior lightweight division seemed on the cusp of respectability. The slick, stylish Kid Chocolate, who was really a featherweight, stopped Benny Bass in seven rounds to take the title and defended it seven times before, surprisingly, losing it to Frankie Klick via seventh-round knockout on Boxing Day 1933.

But then, without much warning, the premier control body, the NBA, decided it would no longer recognize the 12-year-old division, with the result that Klick never defended it (instead twice challenging for the junior welterweight title).

There were no junior lightweight title bouts until December '49, when Sandy Saddler became champion, but after two relatively low-key defenses, he ignored the title and it became dormant again.

Finally, in July 1959, Harold Gomez outpointed Phil Jorgenson to win the title, and nine months later lost it to the first great junior lightweight champion of the modern era, Filipino Gabriel "Flash" Elorde, who defended it 19 times over the next seven years, earning the division the respectability that had previously been lacking.



Sandy Saddler

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1997-2004

When it comes to intense rivalries, great fights, and outstanding fighters, the featherweights in the late-1990s and early-2000s were unbeatable. There may have been better boxers (Willie Pep and Sandy Saddler, for example), but no other featherweight era produced quite the same blend of sustained, exhilarating action over a long period, beginning with the reign of Naseem Hamed, and ending when Marco Antonio Barerra, Manny Pacquiao, and Erik Morales moved up in weight.

By the time he fought in the United States, Hamed was already in decline. He began 1997 by stopping Tom Johnson for the IBF belt in February, and had already beaten several top contenders, including Mexico's Manuel Medina. But he was neglecting his training and was therefore becoming far easier to hit. Still, he had lost none of his extraordinary punching power, and the combination made for fun fights.

Over the next four years, Hamed beat WBA titlist Wilfredo Vazquez and the WBC's Cesar Soto to establish himself as the top dog in the division, but his most exciting fight came in his American debut, the multiple-knockdown thriller against Kevin Kelley at Madison Square Garden in December '97. In the opening round, the once-elusive "Prince" was dropped with a right hook, and again in the second. But as Kelley went for the finish, Hamed dropped him with a southpaw right. Round three was close and intense, but midway through the fourth, Hamed dropped Kelley with a three-punch combination and then finished him off for the full count with a left hook to the temple.

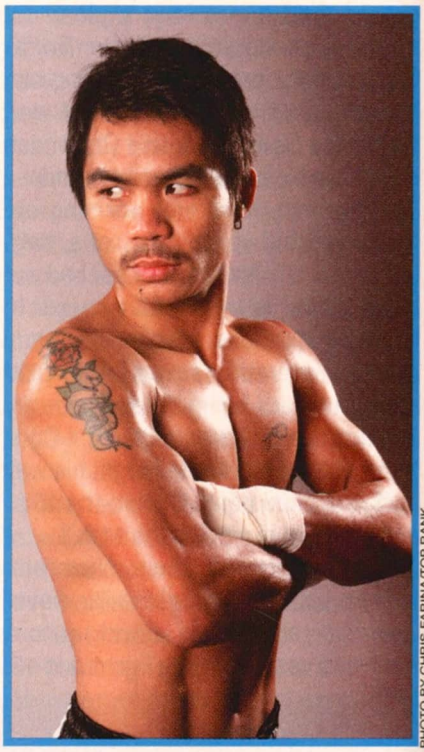


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Pacquiao's thrilling style made him a star

Hamed remained on top for another three years, but eventually his extreme hubris got the better of him. He thought he could walk through Mexico's Marco Antonio Barrera in June 2002 and was ridiculously lax in his training. Barrera chose to box rather than brawl, and won a comfortable unanimous decision. After just one more fight, Naz retired with his tail between his legs.

Barrera had already established his pedigree at junior featherweight, not least in unfairly losing a split decision to his premier Mexican rival, Erik Morales, a year earlier. He would later put in some outstanding performances at 130, but he was at his peak at 126 pounds, combining the power of his early years with a set of extremely refined boxing skills.

Fourteen months after beating Hamed, he resumed hostilities with

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Barrera ends Hamed's unbeaten streak

Morales, who had moved up to featherweight in 2000, winning and defending the WBC title. Morales was a highly capable boxer and an outstanding long-range puncher, and he possessed a granite chin and an insatiable desire to beat Barrera and be recognized as Mexico's best fighter.

But this time it was Barrera, using his superior defensive technique, who prevailed via disputed, unanimous decision. Barrera looked set for a long reign, but even better was to come in the form of the relentless Manny Pacquiao, who overwhelmed Barrera in 11 rounds.

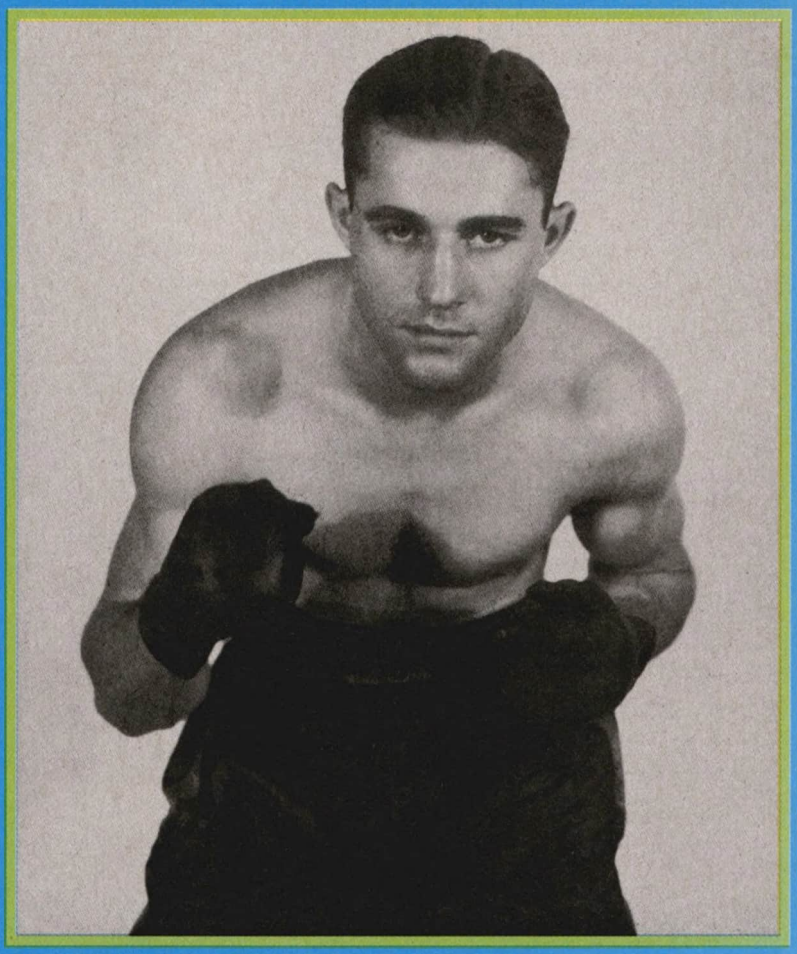
The power, tenacity, and non-stop punching of the Filipino southpaw electrified the fight crowds, propelling him to superstar status. Meanwhile, another outstanding Mexican, the refined counterpuncher, Juan Manuel Marquez, was on a highly impressive run that had seen him pick up the IBF and WBA belts without gaining the kind of recognition enjoyed by Pacquiao, Barrera, and Morales.

Marquez met the favored Pacquiao for the world featherweight title in May '04, and in the opening round looked out of his league. The Filipino dropped him three times and had him on the verge of a stoppage, but somehow Marquez survived and worked his way back, his sharp counterpunching picking up the points to earn him most of remaining rounds. The final verdict was a draw, which was a fair result.

By the end of the year, the greatest era in featherweight history had come to an end, although the rivalries continued. Pacquiao and Barrera joined Morales in the 130-pound division, eventually settling in that order: Pac-Man first, Barrera second, Morales third.

But Marquez accepted his manager's strange advice to turn down an offer of a lucrative return with Pacquiao, instead remaining at featherweight for another three years. He lost his title claim by losing a close fight against talented but obscure Indonesian Chris John, before finally moving up to beat Barerra and lose a disputed split decision to Pacquiao at 130 pounds.

Worst of Times: 1938-1942



Harry Jeffra

In October 1937, Henry Armstrong made a rare trip down from lightweight to seize the world featherweight title from the capable hands of Petey Sarron, knocking him out in the sixth round. He held the title for another year, but never again fought at featherweight. Eventually, after adding the welterweight and lightweight titles to his collection, he was forced to relinquish the 126-pound title, with the result that the division hit a slump.

The New York State Commission recognized Joey Archibald, who lost their title to Harry Jeffra, regained it, and lost it to Chalky Wright (who'd previously been flattened by Armstrong).

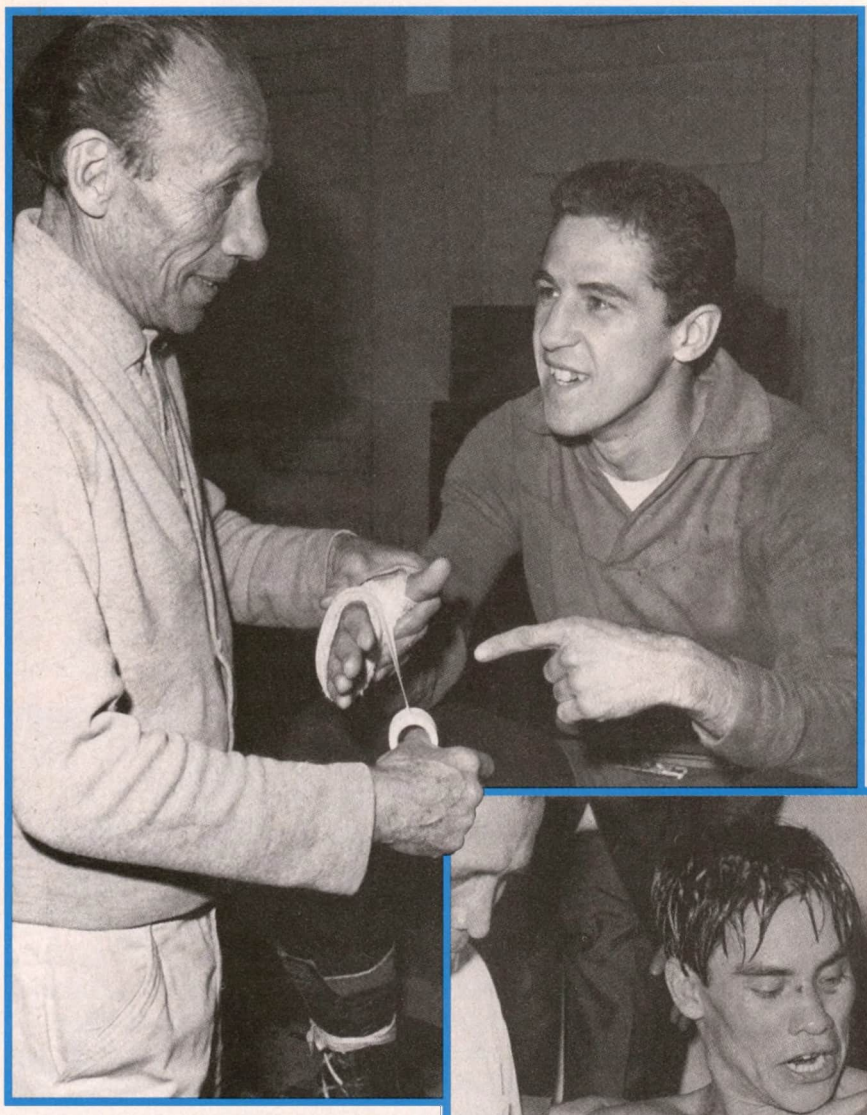
But the rival NBA withdrew recognition from Wright when he declined to accommodate their man, Petey Scalzo, who promptly lost to Richie Lemos. The title went from Lemos to Jackie Wilson, Jackie Calura, Phil Terranova, and, finally, Sal Bartolo.

In other words, it was precisely the kind of mess we've sadly become accustomed to in more recent times. But this time there was a great boxer on hand to settle things.

The sublime Willie Pep relieved Wright of his version of the title in November '42, winning a unanimous decision, and, in June '46, he unified the title by knocking out Bartolo to begin another good era.

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1960-1971



Jofre has his hands wrapped by his father

When Mexico's fading Jose Becerra retired, the bantamweight division had one of its periodic declines, but this time the remedy arrived in quick order, first through the awe-inspiring reign of one of the finest boxers of all-time and then through a wonderfully intense spell of sustained, close-fought fights.

In November 1960, brilliant Brazilian Eder Jofre knocked out Eloy Sanchez in six rounds to win NBA recognition and soon set about the task of reunifying the title. When the rival titlist, Alphonse Halimi, refused to fight him, THE RING recognized Jofre as champion. Then, in January '62, Jofre cleared up any remaining confusion with a 10th-round TKO of Britain's previously unbeaten Johnny Caldwell, who'd twice beaten Halimi the previous year.

The 5'4" Jofre had it all. He was a beautifully balanced, highly skilled boxer with perfect timing, devastating power in both hands, and an extremely solid chin.

Jofre controlled the 118-pound division for five years, fighting all over the world against strong opposition, and was unbeaten in 50 fights when he made his ninth title defense, against former world flyweight champion Fighting Harada in May 1965. Midway through the decade, this division, which had been so effortlessly dominated by

Olivares hams it up for the press after beating Rose

one man, was about to enter its most competitive phase.

The little Brazilian vegetarian was struggling with the weight, but this did not stop him from putting up his title against the best possible opposition, often in their hometowns. In May '65, he traveled to Tokyo to accommodate Harada, who had previously lost to one of Jofre's victims, Jose Medel, and was expected to fall like all the rest. But instead, the hometown favorite delivered a superlative performance of non-stop punching and incessant aggression to squeak through on a disputed split decision.

The 5'3" Harada, who had previously won and lost the world flyweight title against Pone Kingpetch, had reached his formidable peak. While not a big hitter, he was strong, fast, extremely tough, and never stopped throwing leather. This and the fact that he did all of his fighting at home gave him the edge in many close and highly enjoyable fights.

Harada's first world title defense came against skillful Englishman Alan Rudkin, who fought valiantly, but could not keep up with Harada's frantic pace. Next, the Japanese fought a return with 30-year-old Jofre, and this time won a close unanimous decision by margins of one, two, and three points. Harada avenged his previous defeat against Medel and then won a wide decision over Colombia's Bernardo Caraballo.

Harada's fifth defense, in February '68, was originally supposed to be Jesus Pimental, but Pimental withdrew and was replaced by pipe-smoking Australian Lionel Rose. The challenger was huge for the weight and had quick hands and sound defensive skills. To the astonishment of the Tokyo crowd, he deservedly emerged with a majority decision to become the new bantamweight champion.

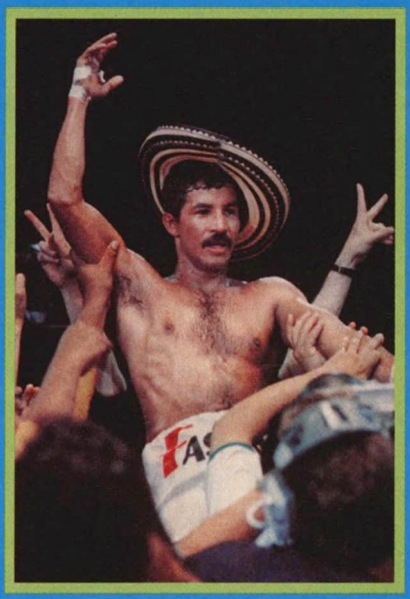
All three of Rose's successful title defenses were extremely close-fought, entertaining affairs. First he won a majority decision over Japan's Takao Sakurai, then he rose from a heavy knockdown to edge an even more controversial split decision over Mexico's Chucho Castillo (which prompted a riot from the crowd), and finally he edged another split decision, this time over Rudkin.

But there was no doubt about his fourth defense. Severely drained from boiling off the weight, Rose was knocked out in five rounds by Mexican Ruben Olivares, who is sometimes ranked behind Jofre in the list of bantamweight greats. The hard-drinking Olivares was a murderous puncher who looked set to rule forever. But after knocking out Rudkin and outpointing Castillo, he suffered his first defeat in 62 fights, when ruled out on a cut eye in a return with Castillo.

Less than six months later, in April '71, Olivares regained the title and held it for a year until fast-living, too many ring wars, and severe weight troubles prompted his title loss to Rafael Herrera in the third defense of his second reign.

This brought to an end the bantamweight division's most illustrious era. The title was split up again and has never been re-unified. Moreover, the best men moved to featherweight, with Olivares winning the WBA and WBC titles, and Jofre winning the WBC title and going unbeaten in his final 25 fights.

Worst of Times: 1984-1988



Miguel "Happy" Lora

The mid-1980s were a period of boring funk among the bantamweights due to a shortage of great fighters and great fights.

They'd previously been dominated by two excellent men, who, sadly, never fought each other: Mexico's Lupe Pintor, who edged Carlos Zarate on a dubious decision, but then proved himself worthy, defending the WBC belt eight times during a 3½-year reign. The other was Jeff Chandler, who defended the WBA belt title nine times in 3½ years.

But in 1983, the WBC stripped Pintor, and he was succeeded by a string of lesser titlists starting with Alberto Davila, whom he'd already beaten. Those who followed over the next four years—Daniel Zaragoza, Miguel "Happy" Lora, Raul Perez—were good boxers, but hardly set the world on fire.

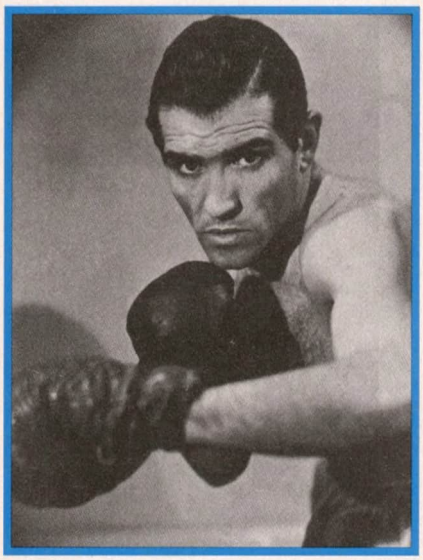
In April '84, a poorly conditioned Chandler lost his title to Richie Sandoval. He, in turn, was battered to defeat by the fringe contender Gaby Canizales, who promptly lost to Bernardo Pinango, who vacated the title in 1988.

The IBF got going in 1984, and although it managed to find a highly capable titleholder in Jeff Fenech, the uncompromising Australian had to move up in weight after two defenses.

In 1988, however, the division began to turn around. Texan Orlando Canizales won the IBF version of the title, holding it for over six years and making 16 defenses before moving up in weight.

FLYWEIGHTS

Best of Times: 1954-1964



Perez fought in 13 different countries

Think of the clichés about small packages: The best things come in them, dynamite comes in them, and so on. Well, it is hard not to descend to that level when reaching for superlatives to describe Pascual Perez. He stood just 4'11", often weighed below 108 pounds, and to top all that he was already in his 29th year when he won the world flyweight title in 1954. But this tiny Argentinean globetrotter would go on to stake a strong claim to being the greatest flyweight of them all, compiling a six-year, nine-defense reign, while also packing in 20 non-title victories.

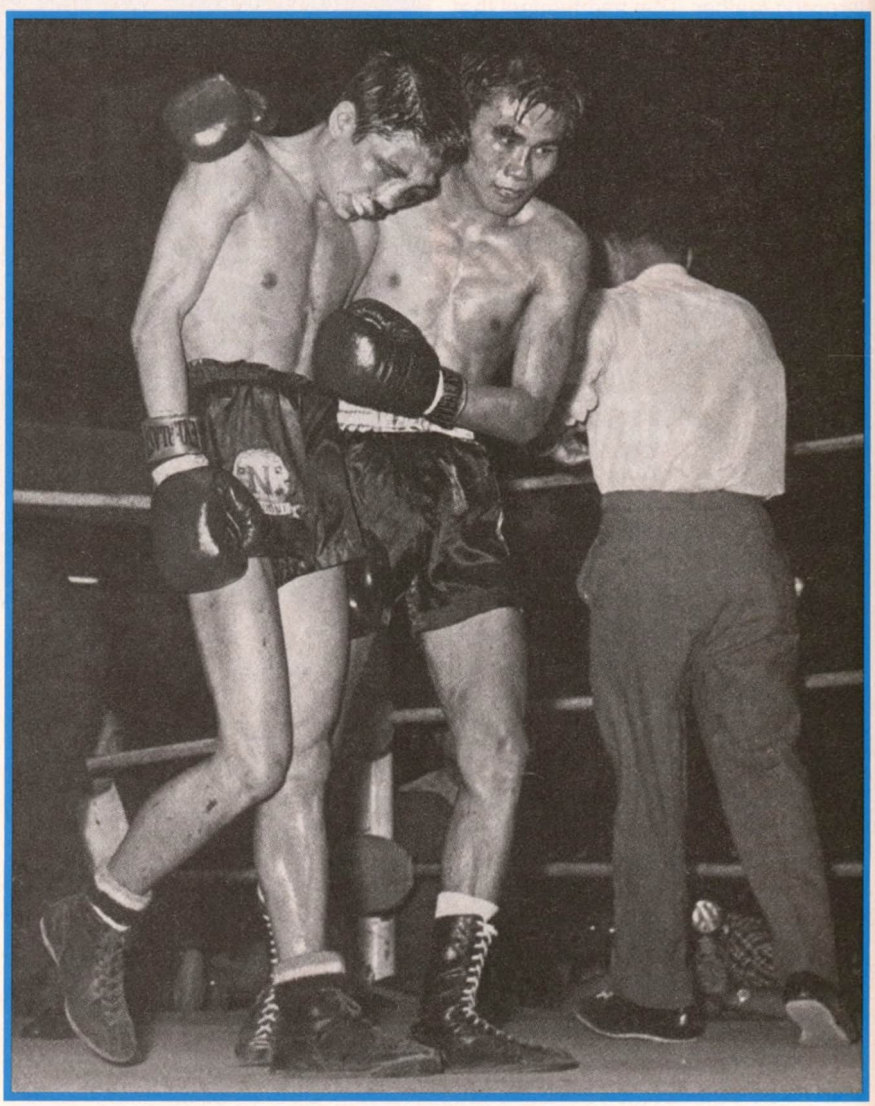
Perez won the Olympic flyweight gold medal in '48 and was unbeaten in 26 fights (24 knockouts) when he traveled to Tokyo to take the world title by outpointing local favorite Yoshio Shirai. Six months later, he repeated the job in five rounds.

Perez was extremely powerful and a vicious puncher with both hands, but he also possessed consummate boxing skills that made him hard to hit and he had a firm chin too. So, despite being considerably smaller than all of his challengers, he had little trouble dominating them and was unbeaten in his first 51 contests.

Most of Perez' reign, therefore, was special in the sense that it featured an outstanding boxer-puncher at the peak of his powers, delivering emphatic victorious performances against highly capable challengers, usually in their own backyards. His was certainly the flyweight division's most impressive reign.

But age began to take its toll, and Perez was losing that vital fraction of a second in speed, reflex, and timing. He suffered his first loss in a non-title match against Japan's Sadao Yaoita, in Tokyo in January '59. In the rematch, with the world title on the line, Perez climbed off the floor to outbox Yaoita and then knock him out in round 13, but it was clear that the gap was closing and the division was entering a new phase.

In his next defense, in Bangkok, Thailand, in March '60, Perez lost the title on a split decision to tall, skilled hometown favorite Pone Kingpetch. The Thai survived a badly gashed and swollen left eye, but for much



Kingpetch wraps a consoling arm around victim Kyo Noguchi

of the bout he managed to keep the slowing Perez away by using his seven-inch reach advantage to good effect, and deserved the decision. This victory began what became perhaps most intensely competitive spell in flyweight history.

Five months later, in Los Angeles, the stylish 25-year-old Kingpetch stopped the 34-year-old Perez in the eighth round, after leading clearly on points in what was Perez' first and only fight in the United States.

Perez battled on, albeit at a lower level. He won his next 28 straight, mainly against mediocre opposition at home, but after losing four of his final six bouts, he retired in 1964, shortly before his 40th birthday. Meanwhile, Kingpetch looked set for a long and productive reign, but in October '62, he traveled to Tokyo to defend his world title for the fourth time, against a 19-year-old terrier, Fighting Harada, and found himself outworked, outfought, outpunched, and finally knocked out in the 11th round of a brutal encounter. Harada's reign lasted a mere three months. In the return, a better-prepared and more aggressive Kingpetch used his educated jab to outbox the weight-weakened teenager to regain the title

But again, Kingpetch was in for a surprise. In another upset, another young Japanese fighter, Hiroyuki Ebihara, blasted out the soft-chinned Thai in Tokyo in September '63. Kingpetch, however, was always better the second time around. Four months later, he turned up in far sharper shape, and outboxed the 23-year-old Ebihara, using that long left jab and also an excellent right uppercut to good effect in another intense battle, to take the world title for the third time.

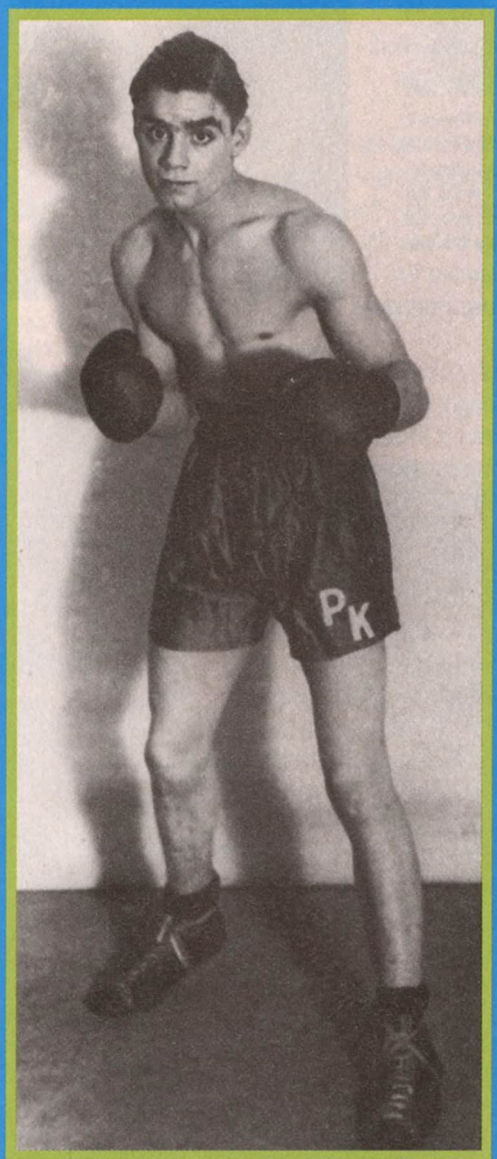
This victory effectively ended the greatest era in flyweight history. Kingpetch was out of action for 15 months, and looked a shell of himself when being outpointed by Italy's Salvatore Burruni in Rome in April 1965. A year later, he retired at the age of 31.

Burruni and his successor, Walter McGowan, were both very capable boxers, but certainly not in the same league as the likes of Kingpetch and Harada, and nowhere near the level of the peak Perez. It would be another decade before the next great flyweight champion emerged in the form of Mexico's Miguel Canto. ■

Gavin Evans is a British free-lance writer and regular contributor to The Ring.

Worst of Times: 1938-1948

Benny Lynch, an extremely tough and highly skilled alcoholic Glaswegian, unified the world title in 1937, but within a year, he'd lost it on the scales, while drinking himself to oblivion. One of his past opponents, Englishman Peter Kane, emerged as the new world champion after beating another Lynch victim, Jackie Jurich. But World War II got in the way and in the 10 years from Kane winning the title, the flyweight division would see a grand total of four world title fights.



Peter Kane

In fact, Kane temporarily abandoned his claim, announcing he was moving to bantamweight, before changing his mind, and finally defending against Jackie Paterson in 1943, five years after his previous flyweight title bout. The Scotsman knocked out the severely weight-drained Englishman in one round.

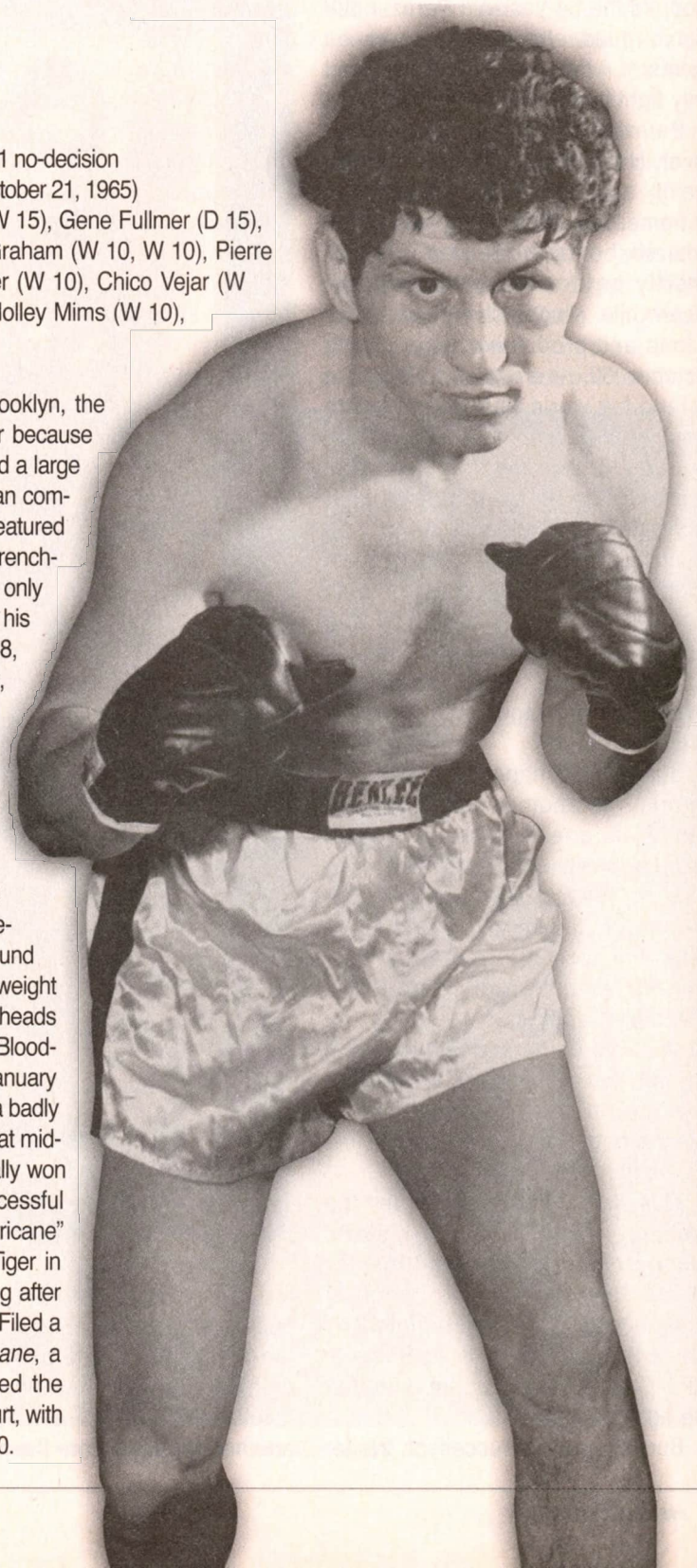
But while Paterson was a pretty decent puncher, he was not much of a boxer, and lost several non-title fights along the way. In March '48, he finally fought rival claimant Rinty Monaghan, who had beaten Dado Marino to win NBA recognition as champion. Irishman Monaghan, who often sang for the crowd after a bout, won on a seventh-round knockout and won the flyweight world title.

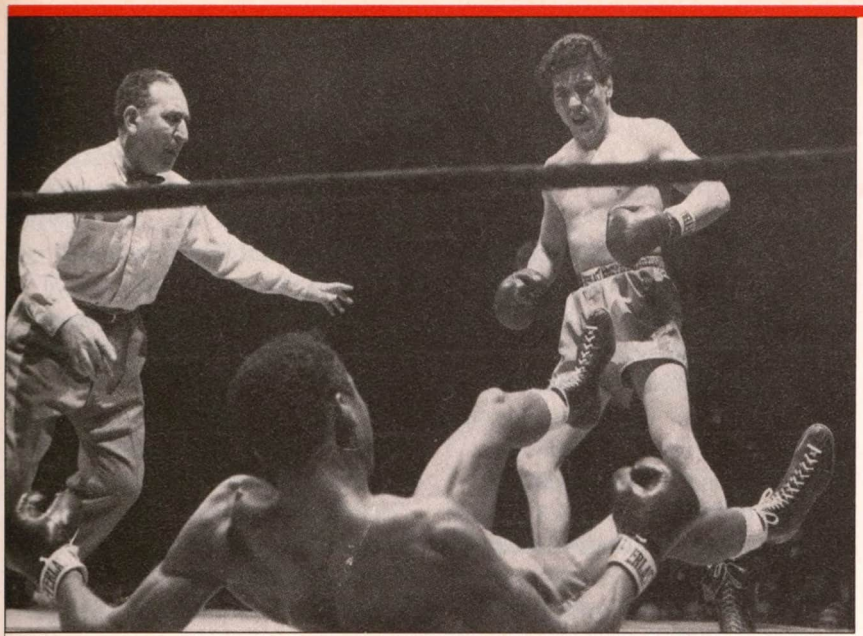
Hall of Fame Profile

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

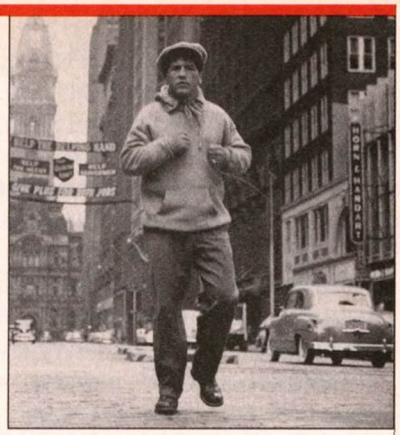
Joey Giardello

Birthdate: July 16, 1930
Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York
Weight Class: Middleweight
Height: 5'10"
Professional Record: 100-25-7 (32) with 1 no-decision
Title: World Middleweight (December 7, 1963-October 21, 1965)
Best Performances: Dick Tiger (W 10, W 15), Gene Fullmer (D 15), Ruben Carter (W 15), Henry Hank (W 10), Billy Graham (W 10, W 10), Pierre Langlois (W 10), Joey Giambra (W 10), Gil Turner (W 10), Chico Vejar (W 10), Joe Shaw (W 10), Tuzo Portuguez (W 10), Holley Mims (W 10), Ray Robinson (W 10)
Year Of IBHOF Induction: 1993
Background: Although he was born in Brooklyn, the cagey stylist was considered a Philadelphia fighter because he lived there throughout most of his career and had a large following among South Philly's large Italian-American community ... Developed a ducking, dodging style that featured an excellent left jab, but could also slug it out in the trenches ... Prone to eye cuts, but the fact that he was only stopped four times in 133 pro bouts is testament to his durability and chin ... Turned pro on October 2, 1948, with a second-round kayo of Johnny Noel in Trenton, New Jersey ... Went 2-1 in a famous three-bout series with Billy Graham during the early-1950s, but had to go to the New York Supreme Court to keep the second bout in the win column after the New York State Athletic Commission changed one of the judge's scores and reversed the decision. The court ruled that the commission did not have the authority to change the scorecard ... Held middleweight champion Gene Fullmer to a bruising 15-round draw in April 1960. It was one of the dirtiest middleweight title fights of all-time, with both men ramming their heads into each other's face like a couple of billy goats ... Blood-splattered 10-round decision over Henry Hank on January 30, 1962, was THE RING's Fight of the Year ... Beat a badly faded Ray Robinson to earn a December '63 crack at middleweight champion Dick Tiger, and, at age 33, finally won the title via 15-round decision ... Made one successful defense, winning a close decision over Ruben "Hurricane" Carter, before losing the 160-pound belt back to Tiger in October '65 ... Fought four more time, finally retiring after outpointing Jack Rodgers on November 6, 1967 ... Filed a federal lawsuit against the makers of *The Hurricane*, a biopic about Ruben Carter, which misrepresented the Giardello-Carter fight. The suit was settled out of court, with Giardello receiving a reported settlement of $300,000.

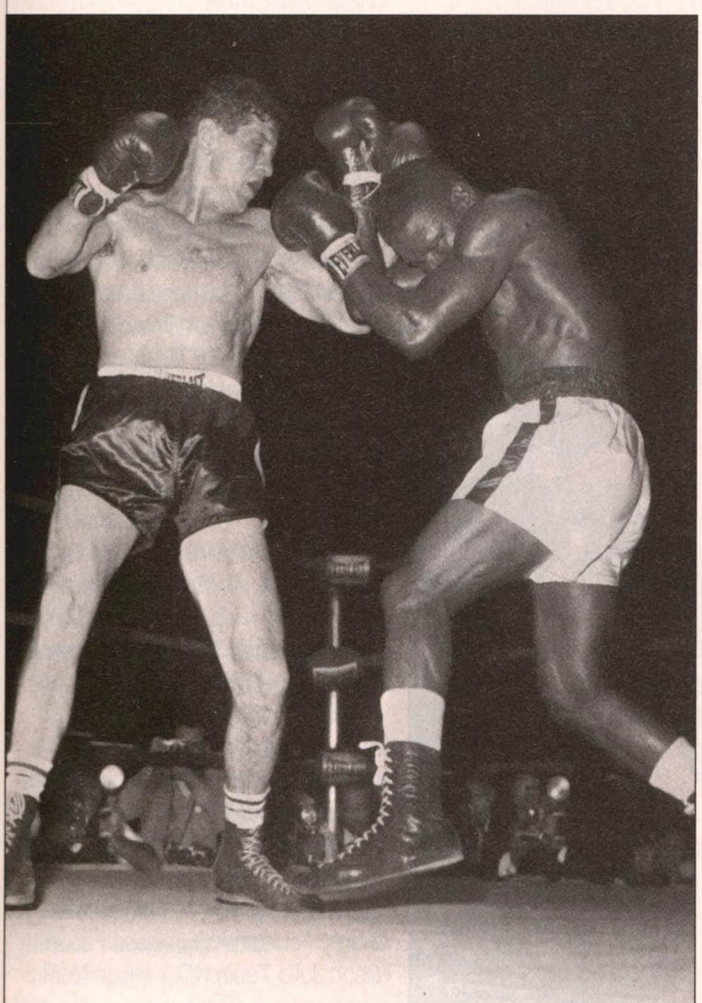




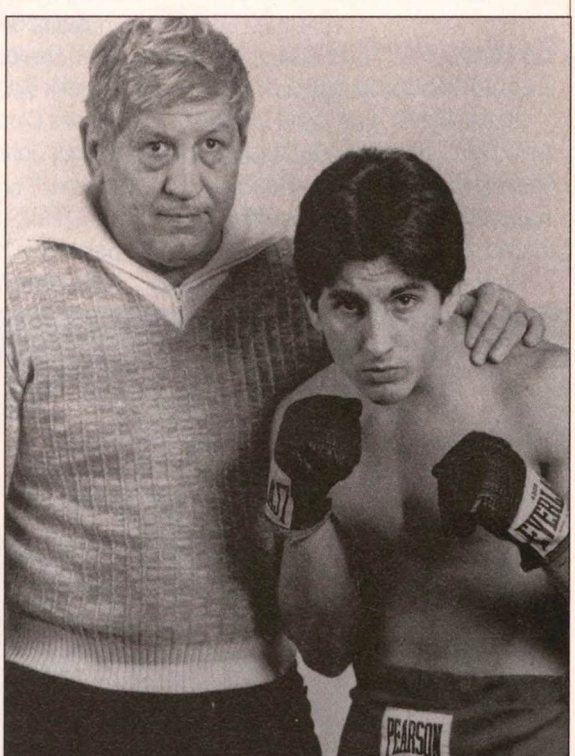
Giardello decks Willie Troy in the second round of a 1954 bout at Madison Square Garden. Referee Al Berl stopped the fight in the seventh round. It was Giardello's third consecutive kayo in New York that year.



Giardello jogs down Broad Street with Philadelphia City Hall in the background. Despite his lengthy career, Giardello was not known as a diligent trainer and probably stopped jogging the moment the photo session was over.



Dick Tiger covers up as Giardello comes around his guard with a left hook. The upset victory earned Giardello the championship in the twilight of his career.



Giardello with his son, Joey Jr., who had a brief pro career in the early-1980s, but never advanced beyond the preliminary ranks.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Adnan Buharalija W 12 Jonathan Pasi
Kevin Johnson W 10 Terry Smith
Chazz Witherspoon W 10 Domonic Jenkins
Jason Estrada W 10 Lance Whitaker
Yakup Saglam W 10 Sergei Babich
Audley Harrison KO 5 Jason Barnett
Cisse Salif KO 1 Clinton Boldridge
Attila Levin KO 1 Willy Perryman
Bermane Stiverne KO 1 Jimmy Haynes
Danny Williams W 6 Marcus McGee
Cesar Acevedo KO 5 Gonzalo Basile
Raphael Zumbano KO 3 Mauro Gomes
Joey Abell KO 2 Maurice Wheeler
Brian Minto KO 1 Chad Van Sickle
John Napari KO 1 Bob Rasheed

Cruiserweights

Krzysztof Wlodarczyk KO 1 Gabor Gyuris
Marco Huck KO 5 Leon Nzama
Saul Farah KO 5 Carmelo Roca
Tomasz Adamek KO 7 O'Neil Bell
Wayne Braithwaite KO 3 Yoan Pablo Hernandez
Geoffrey Batello W 10 Rachid El Hadak
Sean Thompson KO 3 Robert Evans
Lawrence Tauasa KO 2 Eduardo Oscar Rojas
Aaron Williams KO 2 Andre Purlette

Light Heavyweights

Joe Calzaghe W 12 Bernard Hopkins *(Wins World Title)*
Antonio Tarver W 12 Clinton Woods *(Wins IBF Title)*
Chad Dawson W 12 Glen Johnson *(Retains WBC Title)*
Zsolt Erdei W 12 DeAndrey Abron
Adrian Diaconu W 12 Chris Henry
Steve Kroekel W 10 Lars Buccholz
Juergen Braehmer KO 9 Karim Bennama
Shon Davies KO 7 Wayne Brooks
Hendrik Gabel KO 2 Ronny Dauke
Tavoris Cloud KO 1 Mike Wood
Marcus Johnson KO 1 Jose Medina

Super Middleweights

Sakio Bika KO 1 Gustavo Kapusi
Karo Murat W 12 Cristian Sanavia
Felix Hernandez KO 11 Ever Bravo
Peter Quillin W 10 Antwun Echols
Karoly Balzsay KO 10 Mantas Tarvydas
Stjepan Bozic KO 8 Djamel Selini
Yuzo Kiyota KO 7 Zulfikar Ali
Luca Tassi Tech. Win 5 Vigan Mustafa
Adonis Stevenson KO 5 Dhafir Smith
Mike Paschall KO 4 Bruce Rumbolz
Yusaf Mack KO 2 Ernesto Zamora
Ben Crampton KO 2 Plaisakda Singwancha
Victor Oganov KO 2 Kariz Kariuki

Middleweights

Arthur Abraham KO 12 Elvin Ayala *(Retains IBF Title)*
Felix Sturm KO 7 Jamie Pittman *(Retains WBA Title)*
Sebastian Sylvester KO 12 Javier Castillejo
Sebastien Demers W 12 Matt Vanda
Kreshnick Qato W 12 Vitor Sa
David Medina W 10 Victor Lares
Raul Marquez W 10 Bronco McKart
Joe Greene KO 9 Joshua Okine
Maksim Bursak KO 7 Mikheil Khucishvili
Walid Smichet KO 7 Chris Archer
Francois Bastient KO 5 Thierry Karl
David Lopez KO 5 Ryan Davis
Daniel Jacobs KO 4 Leshon Sims

Junior Middleweights

Verno Phillips W 12 Cory Spinks *(Wins IBF Title)*
Sergei Dzinziruk W 12 Lukas Konecny
Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 9 Tobia Loriga
Javier Mamani W 12 Carlos Jerez
Yuri Foreman W 10 Saul Roman
Maurice Weber W 10 Daniel Kaefer
Cornelius Bundrage W 10 Kassim Ouma
Paul McCloskey W 10 Cesar Bazan
Andrey Tsurkan KO 8 Jesse Feliciano
Nilson Julio Tapia KO 1 Milton Nunez

Welterweights

Miguel Cotto KO 5 Alfonso Gomez *(Retains WBA Title)*

PHOTO BY JIM EVERETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Junior middleweight Andrey Tsurkan rams a left into Jesse Feliciano's body

Antonio Margarito KO 6 Kermit Cintron
(Wins IBF Title)
Selcuk Aydin W 12 Lucky Lewele
Paul Spadafora W 8 Shad Howard
Saul Alvarez KO 12 Gabriel Martinez
Dennis Shafikov W 10 Shawn Gallegos
Yuri Nuzhnenko Tech. Draw 10
Irving Garcia
Jesus Soto-Karass W 10 Chris Smith
Joshua Clottey KO 5 Jose Luis Cruz
Isaac Hlatswayo KO 10 Robert Medley
Javier Vega W 10 Daniel Salido
Said Ouali KO 7 Darien Ford
Michael Jennings KO 7
George Ungiadze
Rodolfo Martinez KO 3 Angel Fernandez
David Estrada KO 2 Alexander Quiroz
Tsuyoshi Kamiishi KO 1
Ushiwakamaru Akibei
Welson Alves de Oliveira KO 1
Jose Da Silva
Mark Thompson KO 1 Maurycy Gojko
Mike Jones W 8 Germaine Sanders

Junior Welterweights

Alex De Jesus KO 12 Wilfredo Negron
Devon Alexander W 12 Miguel Callist
Lance Gostelow W 12 Tia Koswara
Lee McAllister W 12 Mihaita Mutu
Willy Blain W 12 Daudy Bahari
Henry Bruseles W10 Ben Tackie
Juho Tolppola W 10 Walter Gomez
Cristian Favela W 10 Miguel Lopez
Shoji Kawase W 10 Naoto Takajo
Jorge Martinez KO 7 Efren Guerrero
Frederic Tripp KO 7
Nugzar Margvelashvili
Juan Urango KO 4
Carlos Wilfredo Vilches
Eusebio Baluarte KO 1
Yai Sithsaithong
Danny Garcia KO 1 Guadalupe Diaz
Kenny Abril KO 8 Jonathan Tubbs

Lightweights

Amir Khan KO 7 Martin Kristjansen
Roman Martinez W 10 Cristian Favela
Jesus Chavez W 10 Daniel Jimenez
Dariusz Snarski W 12 Istvan Nagy
Oscar Pereyra W 11 Sergio Gonzalez
Verquan Kimbrough W 10
Rodney Jones
Victor Dominguez W 10
Gonzalo Juzaino
Arturo Gomez W 10 Sandro Marcos
Yuri Romanov KO 6 Jonathan Thaxton
Jose Reyes KO 4 Ivan Valle
Jhohnny Antequera W 10 Dunis Linan
Daniel Rasilla KO 4 Karim El Ouazghari

Junior Lightweights

Cassius Baloyi W 12 Mzonke Fana
(Wins IBF Title)
Orlando Salido KO 4 Renan Acosta
Leonilo Miranda W 10 Carlos Medellin
Edgar Santana W 10 Josesito Lopez
Ji-Hye Woo W 10 Huang Wen Si
Innocent Anyanwu W 10
Araik Sachbazjan
Yuya Miyagi D 10 Jun Talape
Malcolm Klassen KO 7 Joel De La Cruz
Mahonri Montes KO 6 Juan Ruiz
Yodsanan Nanthachai KO 5
Dennapa Bigshotcamp0
Thong Por Chokchai KO 4 Nobuhisa Doi
Cornelius Lock KO 4 Juan Garcia

Featherweights

Hiroyuki Enoki D 12 Takahiro Aoh
Fahsai Sakkreerin W 12 Edgar Gabejan
Bernard Dunn W 10 Felix Machado
Marlon Aguilar KO 8 Danys Diaz
Choi Tseveenpurev KO 5
Derry Matthews
Ludumo Galada KO 4 Themba Tshicila
Jhonny Gonzalez KO 3 Edel Ruiz

Junior Featherweights

Steve Molitor W 12 Fernando Beltran Jr.
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Sod Lookongyangtoy W 12 Yulio Moro
Rey Bautista KO 2 Genaro Camargo
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 11
Somsak Sithchatchawal
Akifumi Shimoda W 10
Daisuke Yamanaka
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai W 10
Ewan Borne
Masayuki Mitani W 10 Satoshi Niwa
Fabrizio Trotta W 10 Massimo Morra
Bernabe Concepcion KO 2
Torrence Daniels
Wilfredo Vazquez Jr. KO 3
Corey Goodwin
Toshiaki Nishioka KO 3 Jesus Garcia
Eric Morel KO 6 Carlos Valcarcel

Bantamweights

Gennadiy Delisandru W 12
Andrey Kostin
Simpiwe Vetyeka W 12
Nkqubela Gwazela
Gerry Penalosa KO 8
Ratanachai Sor Vorapin
Matthew Edmonds W 10 Sumaila Badu
Sasha Bakhtin KO 7 Hidenobu Honda
Eric Barcelona KO 6 Phil Angcamor
Medgoen Singsurat KO 3
Roger Monserto
Heriberto Ruiz KO 3 Ernesto Rivera
Akira Umano KO 1 Kunihiro Kinoshita
Glenn Porras KO 1 Isidro Balabat
Yan Barthelemy W 6 Jose Garcia Bernal

Junior Bantamweights

Wandee Singwancha W 6
Dan Nafsadan
Andy Bell W 12 Chris Edwards
Richard Olisa W 12 Eden Sonsona
Noriyuki Komatsu W 10
Yuchi Eausampan
Rafael Concepcion KO 3 Jean Perez
A.J. Banal KO 4 Caril Herrera

Flyweights

Takefumi Sakata W 12
Shingo Yamaguchi
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Denkaosan Kaovichit KO 2
Wang Jun Hui
Rayonta Whitfield W 12 Manuel Vargas
Zolani Tete W 12 Xolani Ntese
Masafumi Okubp W 12 Jin-Ki Jung
Tomonobu Shimizu W 10 Kenji Yoshida
Manuel Roman W 10 Sergio Espinoza
Yasuto Aritomi W 10
Wisan Sor Suchanya

Junior Flyweights

Ivan Calderon W 12 Nelson Dieppa
(*Retains World Title*)
Samson Sor Siriporn W 10
Kayoko Ebata
Julia Sahin W 10 Yahaira Martinez
Thaminkhao Sor Tharnthip W 10
Yuki Sano
Kosuke Takeichi W 10
Rollen Del Castillo
Katsunari Takayama KO 9 Mating Kilakil

Strawweights

Oleydong Sithsamerchai KO 4
John Cut Siregar
Agus Situmorang W 10 Tommy Seran
Wanheng Menayothin W 10
Sofhyan Ependi
Walter Tello W 10 Humberto Obando

Steven Luevano W 12 Terdsak Jandaeng

Las Vegas, Nevada: A natural boxer, but a fighter eager to increase his profile by being more entertaining, Luevano, 126, La Puenta, California, couldn't decide whether to be a boxer or a puncher against Jandaeng, 126, Bangkok, Thailand, at the Mandalay Bay Events Center. So the 27-year-old WBO featherweight titlist took turns doing both against the tough Jandaeng. The results were a little scary at times for Luevano, but for most of the fight, he was in control enough to win a comfortable decision.

Luevano prevailed unanimously, 119-109 on the scorecards of judges C.J. Ross (USA) and Paul Smith (USA), and 118-109 from judge Dick Flaherty (USA). THE RING, however, took a closer view of the fight, awarding it to Luevano by a 116-112 margin.

The southpaw Luevano built himself a nice lead through the first three rounds, playing it careful, keeping the 26-year-old Thai away with a nice jab.

But the sway of the fight turned in the fourth round, when Jandaeng's constant pressure resulted in a knockdown, as he caught Luevano with a straight, short left to the chin. Luevano was briefly stunned, but calmly rose from the canvas and made sure referee Robert Byrd (USA) knew he was still in control of his senses.

Luevano apparently still had his legs underneath him, because seconds later he drilled Jandaeng and scored what appeared to be a knockdown, but Byrd somehow missed it, calling it a slip.

The whole sequence was scary enough to force Luevano to return to boxing from the outside, where he strafed Jandaeng repeatedly. Every once in a while, Jandaeng would lure Luevano in and they'd exchange briefly before Luevano would return to boxing mode.

Luevano seemed to be running away with the fight when Jandaeng came back in the eighth with a body attack—which occasionally dipped below the belt line and warranted a warning from Byrd.

Luevano went back to the jab in the ninth and 10th, but the style of the fight turned again in the 11th and 12th rounds. Jandaeng, fighting with a greater sense of urgency, cut off the ring much more effectively and had Luevano backing up. In the 12th, Jandaeng, 29-3 (19), pressed the matter even further, stinging Luevano with a left to the head.

In the end, Luevano, 35-1 (15), was able to withstand Jandaeng's attacks. Overall, Luevano changed directions very well and showed great poise, especially in the fourth round when he was in danger of being stopped.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Top Rank Promotions, Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-15-08)
Joseph Santoliquito

Abner Mares KO 2 Diosdado Gabi

Las Vegas, Nevada: With his all-action style and increasingly apparent talent, Mares, 117, Hawaiian Gardens, California, is gradually emerging as a bantamweight star. In this bout on the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez undercard at the Mandalay Bay Events Center, Gabi, 119½, Davao City, Philippines, was supposed to test Mares' undefeated record, but instead he feebly added to it, thanks to an explosive display from Mares.

Part of the problem for Gabi, 28, was that he initially weighed in eight pounds over the 118-pound limit. The 4'10" Filipino failed twice in an attempt to make weight, and the second time he looked much different, appearing worn out as he missed by a pound-and-a-half. On the other hand, Mares, 22, looked vibrant and ready for what was supposed to be a major challenge.

Early in the first round, the 2004 Mexican Olympian nailed Gabi with a straight counter right that caused him to stagger backward. Gabi, who entered the ring at 135½ pounds on HBO's unofficial scales, had hardly any energy. He barely survived the opening round.

Mares wasted little time in finishing Gabi off in round two. The 5'2" Mexican waded in and landed a quick combination, scoring a knockdown. Referee Jay Nady (USA) reached eight when Gabi rose.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Luevano bangs home a right during demanding win over Jandaeng

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mares cruises to easy kayo of Gabi

But Mares could sense he had his opponent in real trouble, and he continued his assault and polished off Gabi, 30-4-1 (22), with a torrent of punches, forcing Nady to step in and call a halt at the 49-second mark.

"I did think it would go longer than two rounds," Mares, 16-0 (10), said. "But he came in eight pounds over and you can tell by the look of his face he wasn't in any shape when we got into the ring. But I have to fight the guys they put in front of me. He came into this fight with a good record. He was supposed to bring the best out of me."

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Top Rank Promotions, Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-15-08)
Joseph Santoliquito

David Diaz W 10 Ramon Montano

Las Vegas, Nevada: Diaz, 136, Chicago, Illinois, knew what was at stake. Fighting on the undercard of Pacquiao-Marquez II at Mandalay Bay, the prize was right there in front of him. Win, and the WBC lightweight titlist, who seems to be the target of every "name" fighter that emerges from the junior lightweight division (see his close win over Erik Morales) would be in line to make a career-high payday against Pacquiao.

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Joel Casamayor

More often than not, when a 36-year-old fighter gets knocked through the ropes by a hard-punching, undefeated, 27-year-old fighter, that's the end of that. And if the fight somehow isn't over right there, if the knockdown victim gets back into the ring and onto his feet in time, then coming back to win is still just about out of the question.

That Joel Casamayor defeated Michael Katsidis in March was a solid accomplishment. That Casamayor came back from getting knocked onto the ring apron in round six to kayo Katsidis in round 10 was truly extraordinary. This may have been the win that punched his ticket to the Hall of Fame. At the very least, it did something few other fights in the career of the talented but abrasive Casamayor have done: It got boxing fans excited about him.

The bout was a thriller, plain and simple, from the two first-round knockdowns scored by lightweight champ Casamayor to the through-the-ropes blast from Katsidis to the sizzling left hand that started the challenger's downfall in the 10th. While many were writing Casamayor off before the fight, now we're dying to see what he'll do next. Not a bad outcome for a night's work.

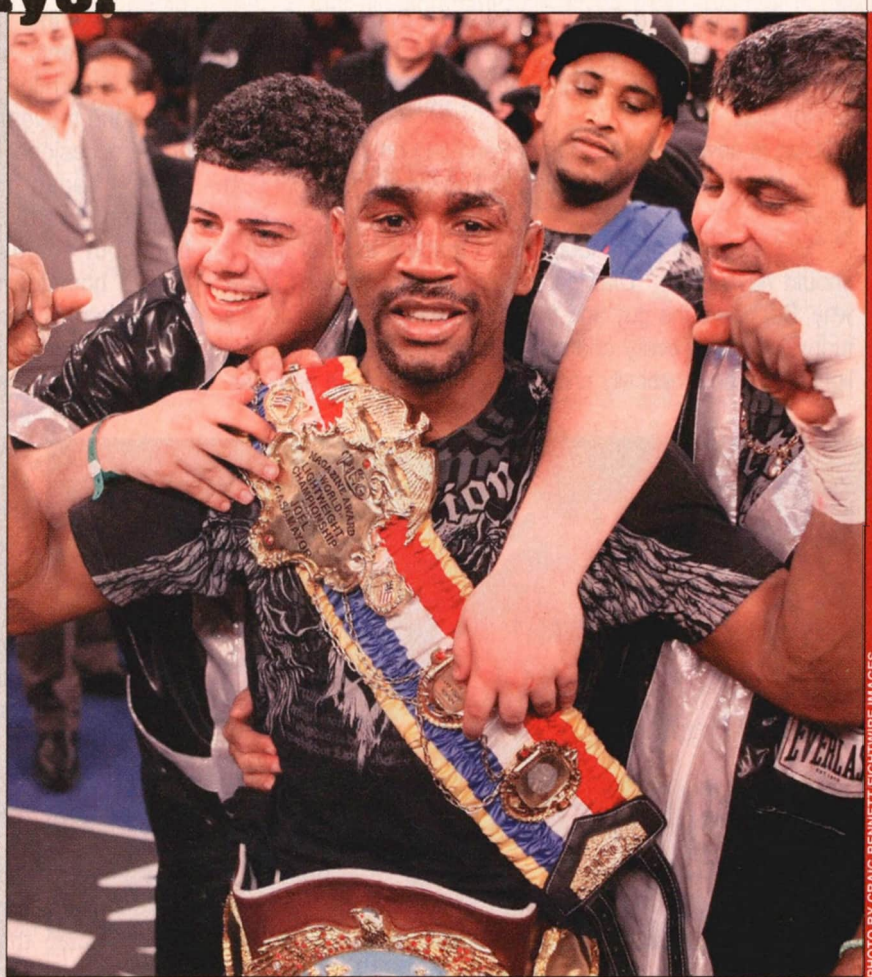


PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

The 31-year-old Diaz wasn't about to blow that in a 10-round non-title fight against feather-fisted Ramon Montano, 136, Las Vegas, Nevada.

He did, however, get off to a slow enough start to make you wonder. Montano, 25, came out strong, winning the first two rounds on the scorecard of judge Glen Trowbridge (USA), as well as THE RING'S card. Diaz seemed content to stay in front of the faster Montano, 15-5-2 (1), and absorb punch after punch.

By the third round, Diaz began picking up the pace and started scoring to the body. A blistering straight right to the head forced Montano to stagger backward in the latter portion of the round.

This seemed to convince Montano to go back to boxing, so he fought more cautiously and pecked away from the outside in the fourth, arguably taking that round.

Sensing the fight—and possibly big money—slipping through his grasp, Diaz took over from the fifth round on. He punished Montano again to the body, often trapping him against the ropes.

It became increasingly evident that Diaz' heavier hands were having an impact. A slight cut opened over Montano's left eye in the sixth. Montano had nothing to hold off the hard-charging Diaz, 34-1-1 (17). Montano would fight back, but only in spurts against Diaz' superior firepower.

At the end of 10 rounds, the judges were all over the place. Dave Moretti (USA) saw it 99-91 for Diaz, while Robert Hoyle (USA) had it 97-93, the same as THE RING. Trowbridge scored it even, 95-95, making the result a majority decision win for Diaz.

Diaz is now expected to fight Pacquiao on June 28, back at the Mandalay Bay, according to Top Rank President Bob Arum.

"Montano was pretty tough, but I made it tougher than it should have been," Diaz said after the fight. "I don't know why. But I beat the guy and now I'm looking at Pacquiao. It's funny, because every champion that comes up from junior lightweight automatically challenges me, like some easy target. That's fine. Let them think that. Erik Morales thought that and look what happened to him. I'm happy Pacquiao beat Marquez, because it's a chance to prove myself again."

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Top Rank Promotions, Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-15-08)
Joseph Santoliquito

Verno Phillips W 12 Cory Spinks

St. Louis, Missouri: Going into the IBF junior middleweight title fight between veterans Phillips and Spinks at the Scottrade Center, there was more discussion in the boxing community about the manner in which the fight was going to be broadcast than there was about the manner it was going to be fought. This bout, in which the pay-cable networks had no interest, ended up shown free and live over the Internet at DonKingTV.com, the first major fight in the U.S. to be offered via this medium without a fee attached to it. That 21st-century twist created a buzz that the matchup could not, and once the bell rang, it was obvious why nobody was overly excited about this IBF-mandated fight.

Though both the 38-year-old Phillips, 42-10-1 (21) with 1 no-contest, and the 30-year-old Spinks, 36-5 (11), are proven ring practitioners with world-class skills, Spinks' defense-first style rarely makes for appetizing action or drama, and this 12-rounder was no exception. The memorable moments were few, and the judges were put to the test to determine in many close rounds whether they preferred the movement and busy pitty-pat punches of Spinks or the occasional eye-catching blows of Phillips. Ultimately, Phillips began his second IBF title reign via upset split decision, a verdict that was hard to argue with after a close fight, but somewhat surprising since the fight was in Spinks' hometown.

Making his second title defense, Spinks, 153, St. Louis, Missouri, was fighting without longtime trainer Kevin Cunningham in the corner, but it didn't seem to matter much, as he used the same slippery tactics he always uses. Phillips, 153, Denver, Colorado, started somewhat slowly while Spinks was finding a home for his straight shots down the middle, but after a couple of rounds, he warmed to the task and managed to move Spinks' head with flush shots on several occasions. It was hard to tell how hurt Spinks was, but without a doubt, he was hurt worse than Phillips was at any time in the fight.

Though blow-by-blow commentator Colonel Bob Sheridan had Spinks running away with the fight, the titleholder's new trainer, Buddy Shaw, told him entering the 11th round that he needed the last two rounds to win the fight. Shaw was closer to the truth than Sheridan. In the end, judge Robert Hoyle (USA) scored it 115-113 for Spinks, but

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Diaz gets past Montano to ensure Pacquiao payday

Jerry Griffin (USA) had the same score for Phillips, and Robert Paolillo (USA) scored it a rather wide 116-112 for Phillips. THE RING had it 114-114.

"I felt good, just a little rusty," said Spinks after losing for the second consecutive time (he also dropped a close decision in a middleweight title challenge against Jermain Taylor 10 months earlier). "Verno fought a good fight. I'm upset with myself. I let myself down."

"He is hard to adapt to," Phillips said of Spinks. "He is sneaky. You lean in, he will hit you with a one-two. I just relied on my experience. I had harder shots."

The referee was Gerald Scott (USA).

Promoter: **Don King Productions**

(3-27-08)

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Ayala samples Abraham's right-handed power

Arthur Abraham KO 12 Elvin Ayala

Kiel, Germany: A pair of defeats to Season Three *Contender* star David Banks and a draw against Season One *Contender* winner Sergio Mora in his most recent bout were the only results of note on the record of Ayala, 159¾, New Haven, Connecticut, who was beaten soundly in a challenge for the IBF middleweight title by Abraham, 159½, Berlin, Germany, via Yerevan, Armenia, before a left uppercut knocked him out in the final round at the Sparkassen Arena. It was the 28-year-old Abraham's seventh title defense.

Discussions are underway to bring Abraham to America this year in anticipation of a match against world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik either late this year or early next year. "That's the plan we have," Pavlik's promoter, Bob Arum, reported to ESPN.com, and the Armenian is eager to accept the challenge.

"My goal now is to fight Kelly Pavlik," he confirmed. "I want to fight in America and I'm ready to do it. If the deal can be done, I will have no problems defending my title over there and then meeting Pavlik."

Wilfried Sauerland, Abraham's promoter, referred to dates at variance with Arum's timetable, but, significantly, he indicated that the timing of a Pavlik-Abraham encounter is almost agreed. "Arthur will box on June 21 in the USA," Sauerland declared. "There is an obligatory defense [of his IBF title] planned for September in Germany, and afterwards we have an agreement to fight against Kelly Pavlik in December or January in the USA"

It would be an exciting prospect, with both boxers having overcome the hard-punching Edison Miranda in thrilling encounters, Abraham after having his jaw broken badly in a bloody fight. "King Arthur" enjoyed more straightforward title defenses subsequently against Canada's Sebastien Demers, whom he stopped in three rounds, fellow Armenian Khoren Gevor, whom he stopped in the 11th round, and Britain's Wayne Elcock, who lasted five rounds, but Ayala, 18-3-1 (8), came to fight and Abraham did not have it all his own way.

A knockdown in the fifth round, the first time that the 27-year-old American had ever been off his feet, solidified Abraham's control of the bout, and he maintained his assault over the next three rounds. But Ayala managed to back up Abraham, 26-0 (21), in the 10th with a sustained attack and seemed to have achieved his main purpose of survival before the 28-year-old Abraham unleashed a left uppercut in the final round that almost lifted Ayala off his feet. Ayala pitched forward onto the canvas and remained down for the count of Puerto Rican referee Roberto Ramirez, the end coming at the 2:32 mark.

"I always believe in going for the knockout, but first you have to control the fight, which is what I did, and then the knockout will come," said Abraham. "I had the fight under control because I had the right tactics to tire him throughout each round before attacking hard in the final minute leading up to the bell. I waited, and my chance came, as I knew it would."

Now he is looking for his chance at Pavlik.

Promoter: **Wilfried Sauerland**

(3-29-08)

Brian Doogan

Ivan Calderon W 12 Nelson Dieppa

San Juan, Puerto Rico: When it comes to world junior flyweight champion Calderon, 107¾, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico, are fight details even necessary anymore? The 5' southpaw jabs, he moves, he boxes, he barely gets hit, and he wins decisions. Often, those decisions are of the near-shutout variety, and against fading 37-year-old ex-titlist Dieppa, 108, Vieques, Puerto Rico, there was nothing "near" about it. "Iron Boy" won all 12 rounds on all three scorecards to record his second defense of the RING and WBO titles he took from Hugo Cazares on a split decision last August.

The crowd at Coliseo Roberto Clemente was pumped for the showdown between local favorites, but Dieppa, loser of two of his previous three, was incapable of providing them

with a competitive battle. Despite giving up four inches in height and three inches in reach, Calderon, 33, had his way throughout. Judges Carlos Colon (Puerto Rico), Patricia Morse Jarman (USA), and Cesar Ramos (Puerto Rico) all scored it 120-108, agreeing that there wasn't a single round that could be given to the slower challenger, who fell to 25-5-2 (14) with 1 no-contest. The referee was Jose H. Rivera (Puerto Rico).

Calderon, 31-0 (6), now owes Cazares a rematch, which is expected to come sometime over the summer. Provided Cazares doesn't deplete himself making the 108-pound limit, that fight figures to be considerably tougher than this one was.

Television: **Pay-per-view**
Promoter: **Ivan Rivera**
(4-5-08)

Gerry Penalosa KO 8 Ratanachai Vorapin

Quezon City, Philippines: Philippine boxing continues to enjoy "the Pacquiao effect," with more and more big-time fight cards being held in the country and even broadcast around the world. This has proved just the meal ticket for Penalosa, who only a few years back had retired in frustration at not being able to land big fights. But when Penalosa found his mojo again in August 2007, knocking out Jhonny Gonzalez in Sacramento with a wicked bodypunch and claiming the WBO bantamweight title, he was thrust into the mix of a resurgent sport in a country looking for heroes.

For his first defense, the crafty 35-year-old veteran from San Carlos City, Philippines, headlined a card promoted at the legendary Araneta Coliseum, site of the "Thrilla In Manila" back in 1975. Penalosa's opponent was a fighter he knew well, Thailand's Vorapin, whom Gonzalez had defeated to claim the WBO strap. The two had met eight years prior in Manila, with Penalosa knocking Vorapin out in the sixth round after the Thai purposefully dropped his guard in a show of hot-dogging defiance and subsequently paid the price by being drilled to the canvas.

Penalosa, 118, whose slick counterpunching style has drawn raves throughout his long career, has had notorious problems with fighters who run. Fortunately for him, Vorapin, 118, was not the kind to put on his track shoes. After a tentative first round, Penalosa took complete control of the fight. Early in round two, Penalosa opened up and landed several searing combinations for which the 31-year-old Vorapin had little answer.

In round three, Penalosa staggered Vorapin with a four-punch combination and then continued to fire artillery in a patient and methodical manner. In the next few rounds, Vorapin, who exhibited little side-to-side movement, gamely fired back, but his straight-ahead style was the perfect fit for Penalosa, who landed punches to all parts of Vorapin's body from nearly every conceivable angle.

By round five Vorapin's face had become bloated and red and it was clear this fight wouldn't go the distance. Penalosa was in no hurry, however, and appeared to take a breather for a round-and-a-half. In the seventh, Penalosa again turned up the pressure as he battered Vorapin mercilessly. Early in round eight, Penalosa knocked Vorapin, 72-10 (48), to the floor. Vorapin gamely got up and then ate a buffet full of leather before referee Gino Rodriguez (USA) stepped in to call an end to the bout.

After receiving congratulations in the ring from Manny Pacquiao and soaking in the cheers of the 6,000-plus fans in attendance, Penalosa, who admits he only has a few fights left in his career, called out WBO super bantamweight titlist Daniel Ponce De Leon, whom he lost to via disputed 12-round unanimous decision in March 2007.

Freddie Roach, who trained Penalosa, 53-6-2 (35), in his Wild Card gym in Los Angeles for this fight and who worked the corner against Vorapin, said Penalosa will face a stiffer test if that fight is made.

"Gerry looked great," Roach said. "He was extremely accurate with his punches. But against Ponce De Leon, he'll have to work harder to cut off the ring."

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, Ala Boxing**
(4-6-08)
Ted Lerner

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Penalosa returns home to kayo Vorapin

Steve Molitor W 12 Fernando Beltran Jr.

Rama, Ontario: Molitor, 121½, has set an exhausting pace over the last nine months, and he made his fourth defense of the IBF junior bantam belt in that time span by comprehensively outboxing Beltran, 121½, in a competitive but ultimately one-sided affair. There was more tension the morning of the bout than in the fight itself, as the 26-year-old Beltran, Culiacan, Mexico, made three trips to the scale before finally making weight.

Still, Molitor claimed the determined Beltran, who dropped a 12-round decision to Joan Guzman in '05, was his most difficult adversary to date. It was a surprising statement from "The Canadian Kid," considering he saw his poise tested by his prior opponent, Ricardo Castillo, in a bout in which he sustained severe cuts above and below his left eye.

Beltran's only real accomplishment in a fight that saw him win maybe a round or two was his ability to re-open the cut above Molitor's eye in the ninth round courtesy of a grazing jab. An argument could be made that, given the severity of the wounds sustained in his January bout against Castillo, Molitor returned to battle prematurely.

But, to be fair, the southpaw Molitor's success since stopping England's Michael Hunter for the vacant junior featherweight strap in late-2006 has been measured by the number of rounds the superlatively gifted boxer has conceded to the opposition, which has been a scant few. It's hard to fault him for moving intrepidly to cast aside his mandatory in Beltran and further advance his place amongst the elite at 122 pounds.

"I'm 28 and I need to stay busy," said Molitor, who celebrated a birthday one day before the match. "Guys like Julio Cesar Chavez, James Toney, all those guys stayed busy and that's what made them great boxers."

If Molitor, one day, has a claim on greatness, it will no doubt be a product of the nifty boxing skills that were on display against Beltran. The challenger's dogged aggression kept the bout interesting in the early rounds before Molitor began to deploy an offense that was impressive as much for its diversity as its precision. He blasted the body with two-punch combinations and commanded the distance with sizzling left leads that the slower Beltran proved incapable of avoiding. Inside, Molitor used lightning quickness to rattle off combinations, punctuating his exchanges on several occasions with uppercuts that split Beltran's guard and snapped back his head.

Still, Beltran remained determined, answering Molitor's assault with a stiff jab and repeated bodywork that kept a respectful Molitor mobile between exchanges. While no one will ever mistake him for a knockout artist, Molitor's punches came with enough speed and snap to keep Beltran wary. And by round seven, the sheer accumulation of punishment absorbed by the Mexican seemed to have him sufficiently slowed and softened for a late-rounds stoppage.

Beltran, 30-3-1 (18), stood in with Molitor in round nine, where an exchange of blows yielded the cut above Molitor's eye. Spurred on by the damage, Beltran drove home punches to Molitor's midriff before a low blow prompted referee Mark Nelson (USA) to deduct a point from the Mexican, having warned him for the same infraction in round two.

The cut seemed to ignite Molitor, 28-0 (10), who closed round nine furiously and stepped up his attack over the balance of the match.

"Steve gets stronger as the fight goes on," observed cutman Lenny DeJesus, who did effective work in patching up Molitor between rounds. "He would have been a terrific 15-round fighter."

Judges Alejandro Lopez (Mexico) and John Parra (USA) each scored 120-107, while Kelly Zolnierczyk (Canada) scored 119-108 all for Molitor. THE RING favored Molitor by a margin of 118-109.

Molitor, a native of Sarnia, Ontario, who currently resides in the Toronto suburb of Mississauga, is tentatively scheduled to make a fifth successive appearance in August at Casino Rama, located one hour north of the city, where his last four bouts have enjoyed sellout crowds. But first, a weary but satisfied looking Molitor said he would take a well-earned month away from the gym to properly allow time for his cut to heal.

As for the division's stars, aggressive moves will be made to try to sign a fight with Celestino Cabellero or Daniel Ponce De Leon and garner some needed exposure in the United States.

"Canada has seen it," commented trainer Chris Johnson. "Now it's time for the world to know."

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**

(4-5-08)

Paul Salgado

Andreas Kotelnik KO 12 Gavin Rees

Cardiff, Wales: Too skilled, too accurate, and too good of a puncher, Kotelnik, 140, Hamburg, Germany, via Lvov, Ukraine, outclassed, wore down, and ultimately stopped the brave Rees, 140, Newbridge, Wales, in the closing seconds of the final round to win the WBA super lightweight title at the Cardiff International Arena. It was Rees' first defense of the belt, which he had won last July in a shocking points win against Frenchman Souleymane M'baye.

Kotelnik, a silver medalist at the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney, where he was beaten by the great Cuban, Mario Kindelan, demonstrated the slick movement and sharp counterpunching technique that were his hallmarks as an amateur. Having run Junior Witter close three years ago in a European title fight and boxed to a draw against M'baye in Liverpool last year in another WBA title challenge, a bout that

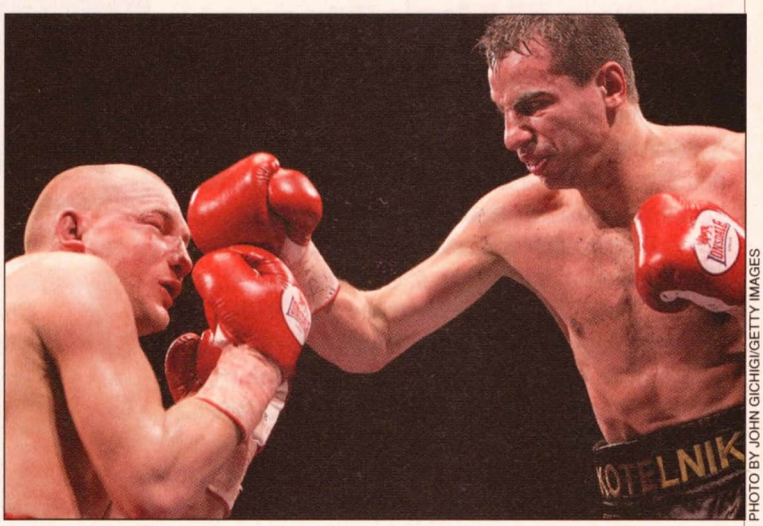


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Kotelnik ends Rees' brief reign

many observers believed he had won, Kotelnik was always expected to be a formidable challenge for Rees. The titleholder took up the gauntlet gamely and almost survived the terrible onslaughts that had built a substantial points lead for the Ukrainian, only to meet his fate in the 12th round.

During the early rounds, Rees' work rate and commitment, along with a concentrated body attack, kept him in the fight, but the more eye-catching and damaging work was being done by Kotelnik, 29-2-1 (13), from the outset. Time and again, Rees stood in range with his hands down and was made to pay by Kotelnik's heavy right hands.

Rees, 27-1 (13), sustained a broken nose in the middle rounds, but a burst eardrum, sustained as early as the second round, was the more debilitating factor for the Welshman. "I took a clout on the right ear, which began bleeding inside," he said. "It took everything from me. The nose was no problem."

Defiantly, the 27-year-old Rees kept smiling at Kotelnik as the Ukrainian began to unload increasingly more powerful punches, but the Welshman was unable to answer back with anything substantive. After 11 rounds, the 30-year-old challenger was ahead by five points on one judge's card and by three points on the other two.

"You've got to get the big shots going, the big, big shots," urged Rees' trainer, Enzo Calzaghe, in the interval before the final round. "But I've hit him with the big shots," Rees replied and laughed.

Instead, it was Kotelnik who landed the big punch, a pinpoint right counter to the chin, which floored Rees in the final minute. He beat the count of Puerto Rican referee Luis Pabon, but the followup onslaught convinced Pabon to intervene at the 2:34 mark.

"I'm terribly disappointed and I'll probably end up in the pub for a week," Rees reflected. "But you've got to laugh or you cry, and I know which one I prefer to do."

Promoter: **Sports Network**

(3-22-08)

Brian Doogan

Felix Sturm KO 7 Jamie Pittman

Düsseldorf, Germany: Pittman, 159½, Brisbane, Australia, had not been beaten before in his four-year career, but he had never mixed in world class or remotely near it, nor had he fought outside Australia, and Sturm, 158½, Hamburg, Germany, had it mostly his own way before he stopped Pittman in the seventh at the Burg-Waechter Castello. It was Sturm's third defense of the WBA middleweight title, which he regained from Spain's Javier Castillejo last year.

More intriguing than the bout was the backdrop of a $2-million offer made by Arthur Abraham's promoter, Wilfried Sauerland, to Sturm and his promoter, Peter Kohl, for a unification bout on July 19. "Sturm told everyone he wanted to fight Arthur and that he would win 24 rounds against him," Sauerland said. "We are happy to prove him wrong and that's why we have put a great offer on the table. This is the fight that everybody in Germany wants to see."

Abraham was willing, apparently, to postpone his opportunity to box in America in June in order to make the fight, but Sauerland insisted that he had heard nothing back from Sturm or his team. It can hardly be that Sturm was too preoccupied with Pittman, 16-1 (7), for he bossed the bout after Pittman won the opening two rounds on the judges' cards. Utilizing his jab and driving in hard right hands and solid combinations, the 29-year-old German was too versatile and too powerful for his challenger from that point, finding a home for his right hand. Although the 26-year-old southpaw stayed busy, Sturm continued to land the cleaner and more effective blows, exploiting a cut over Pittman's right eye, which was caused by an accidental clash of heads in round two.

A left hook to the body by Sturm dropped Pittman to his knees in the fifth. The Australian survived the crisis, but he was nailed by more hard punches in the sixth before Sturm floored him again with a left-right combination. Pittman, a 2004 Olympian, could no longer see out of his right eye because of heavy bruising, and another knockdown in the seventh prompted American referee Russell Mora to stop the bout at the 0:36 mark.

"You could see tonight my best weapon, my boxing skills, my movement," said Sturm, 29-2-1 (13).

Promoter: **Universum-Box Promotions**

(4-5-08)

Brian Doogan

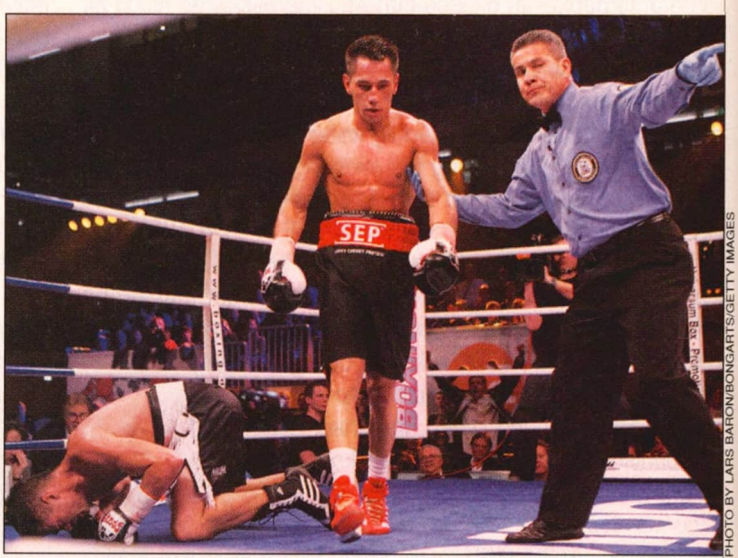


PHOTO BY LARS BARON/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sturm stops overmatched Pittman in the seventh

Takefumi Sakata W 12 Shingo Yamaguchi

Chiba, Japan: It wasn't easy for WBA flyweight titlist Sakata, 112, Japan, who got off to his typical slow start and got knocked to the canvas in the third, but he desperately rallied over the second half of the fight to earn a close, unanimous decision over game compatriot Yamaguchi, 111½, at the end of 12 fast rounds. Durability and determination were keys for Sakata in allowing him to make his third successful defense of the title.

In the first round, Yamaguchi displayed a brilliant opening attack that put Sakata on the defensive. Sakata looked slow, stiff, and sluggish, and Yamaguchi was also in command in the second, when he followed the pattern of the previous round and threw plenty of leather at the nervous beltholder.

Fifteen seconds into the third, Yamaguchi connected with a beautifully timed right cross over a lazy left jab, and down went Sakata. The titleholder beat the count of referee Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan), and Yamaguchi swarmed him. Sakata was still dizzy and damaged, but he used a tight guard to withstand the challenger's wild combinations.

As if the shocking knockdown woke him up, Sakata turned aggressive and began to throw combinations in the fourth, winning back a point. The fifth saw Yamaguchi reset his engine and land busy combos, and Sakata sustained a cut over the right eyebrow midway through the round. The sixth was a turning point round, as Sakata positively responded to the challenger's aggression with his trademark body attack.

It was all Sakata in the seventh, as he moved forward behind a barrage of punches at close range and Yamaguchi retreated and could only throw one punch at a time. Sakata began to throw good jabs in the eighth and effectively aimed at the breadbasket of the fading challenger.

Sakata, 32-4-2 (15), continued to outwork Yamaguchi, 22-5-2 (8), in the ninth and 10th, and his persistent body bombardment seemed to pay off as the contest progressed. The 11th was so close that all three judges scored it 10-10, but Sakata, physically bigger and more powerful than the natural 108-pounder Yamaguchi, dominated the 12th with his aggressiveness.

Judge Takeo Harada (Japan) scored the fight 115-113, while Michael Lee (Korea) and Kazunobu Asao (Japan) both saw it 116-112, all in favor of the defending titlist.

While some may criticize Sakata for his slow starts, he is still very popular among those fans who love his heart and determination to make up for what he lacks in ring science.

Promoter: **Kyoei Promotions**

(3-29-08)

Joe Koizumi

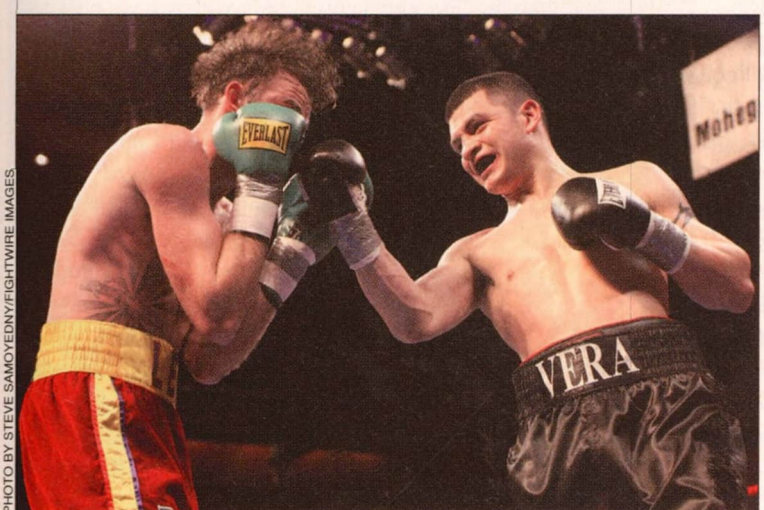


PHOTO BY STEVE SAMOYEDNY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Vera exposes heavily hyped Lee

Brian Vera KO 7 Andy Lee

Uncasville, Connecticut: Trainer Emanuel Steward may have built hot prospect Lee up to be the next Thomas Hearns, but Vera wasn't buying it. And after a little less than seven rounds of action at Mohegan Sun, neither is anybody else.

Though lefthander Lee, 158½, Limerick, Ireland, had all of the advantages in skill and technique, Vera, 162, Fort Worth, Texas, was sturdier, better conditioned, and more determined. Simply put, none of Lee's various edges were enough to thwart Vera's superior heart and toughness. Trailing on all cards, Vera kept finding a home for his right hand until referee Tony Chiarantano (USA) jumped in and stopped the fight at the 2:17 mark of round seven.

The 23-year-old Lee, a 2004 Olympian, had things going his way early on, stopping Vera's charges with a stinging straight left. With about a minute to go in round one, Vera, 26, walked into a particularly sharp left hand, wobbled, and went down when Lee followed up with a flurry of punches. Though *The Contender* Season Three contestant dusted himself off, the fight was off to just the kind of start everyone expected, as Vera was believed to be overmatched and tailor-made for Lee.

The second round featured more of the same, except Vera did find a home for one particularly flush right hand, a portent of things to come. Lee's one-twos dominated round three, and he was doing well in the fourth also until Vera caught him with a couple of left hands and opened a cut along the side of the Irishman's right eye. That's where the pendulum began to swing, doubt creeping into Lee's mind, confidence growing in Vera's.

The sixth round was a thriller. Lee was growing exhausted and was forced to stand still and trade more, to the delight of both Vera and the crowd. The reality-show contestant's right hand couldn't miss, though Lee was banging home plenty of straight lefts to keep it competitive. Still, a weary Lee stumbled to his stool after the round, and it was apparent that his perfect record was in jeopardy.

Vera exhibited pure aggression in round seven, and landed two hard rights that made Lee slump into the ropes. The pre-fight favorite showed heart, however, coming back with a quick combination. But Vera couldn't be discouraged, and he got inside and landed an excellent straight right, causing Lee to lurch on his tired legs. Ref Chiarantano stepped in and called off the fight just as Lee was throwing a left hand in return, probably not the greatest timing from the third man, but the protest was minimal because it was clear Lee, 15-1 (12), had nothing left in the tank and was only going to take more punishment.

"I heard what you guys said," Vera, 16-1 (10), said afterward. "You guys didn't give me a chance, but you can't measure this," he declared, banging his fist against his heart.

In the immediate aftermath of the fight, Lee indicated that he wanted an immediate rematch, but Vera's promoter, Jeff Wald, said they'd prefer to go

another direction. Whether that was a negotiating tactic or an honest lack of interest in the fight remains to be seen.

Television: **ESPN2**

Promoter: **Pugnacious Promotions**

(3-21-08)

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/GETTY IMAGES

Feather-fisted Kristjansen is overwhelmed by Khan

Amir Khan KO 7 Martin Kristjansen

Bolton, England: Khan's evolution from 17-year-old silver medalist at the 2004 Olympic Games into a contender for world-title honors continued when he dispatched Kristjansen, 134½, Slagelske, Denmark, in the seventh round at the Bolton Arena. By the end of the year, Khan is expected to face Nate Campbell, the WBA, WBO, and IBF titleholder.

At 21 years old, Khan, 135, Bolton, England, has reached a critical juncture in his career. He has been blessed with balance, diamond-hard nerve, and lightning speed, and he is instinctively dangerous and a predacious puncher. But, despite being floored twice as a pro, he has yet to experience the kind of hard place to which Campbell or RING champion Joel Casamayor may be able to take him. Nonetheless, his promoter, Frank Warren, has confidence in his prodigy.

"I'd fancy Khan to beat [Campbell] even if they met before the end of the year, and that's the fight we are aiming for, but I won't let Amir be rushed," said Warren. "I'm confident that we'll see Amir in a world title fight before the end of 2008."

Kristjansen, 19-2-3 (5), had been due to box Khan in February, but withdrew when he suffered a bout of flu. Gairy St. Clair took his place and went the 12-round distance with Khan. Kristjansen had never been stopped in his six-year career, but apart from veteran Italian Stefano Zoff, against whom he could manage only a defeat and draw in two encounters, there were no recognizable names on his record. Significantly, his lack of punching power was reflected in the fact that he had stopped only five opponents.

Khan began by firing off a series of snappy jabs while looking for a spot to land his right hand. A solid left hook caught the Dane on the jaw, but Kristjansen countered with an overhand right to the chin. The effect was minimal, but it may have served as a reminder to Khan to tighten his defenses. Khan won the round with his superior punch output and, after eating a couple of jabs near the start of the second round, he stepped up the pace and increased the authority of his punching. With a rapid-fire burst of left uppercuts, hooks, and right crosses, he drove the Dane against the ropes and kept up the pressure. Kristjansen rode with the punches, but he had no firepower with which to fight back.

Khan, 17-0 (13), stayed controlled into the third round before he hurt the Dane with a left-right combination and followed up with a left hook, opening a cut on the 30-year-old Kristjansen's forehead. While his boxing was controlled and disciplined, the crowd seemed to desire something more, a hint of the malevolence that had resulted in the likes of Graham Earl being unable to survive a single round against Khan last December. Some of his boxing became ragged in the fourth and he continued to be made to miss. Kristjansen even landed a left-right-left combination to the face as Khan pedaled backward before he paid by taking a strong right cross to the head.

Oliver Harrison, Khan's trainer, exhorted his fighter to shorten his blows in the fifth, and a left hook to body was followed up by more combinations to the head. A hook to the body and another to the head began to diminish the Dane's resistance in the seventh round, and a hard left hook and right hand to the jaw precipitated a vicious volley of blows that put Kristjansen on the canvas. Khan appeared to fire another couple of blows even though Kristjansen was down, but referee Mickey Vann (England) issued a count. Kristjansen was quickly put down again by another combination, and then the final knockdown, climaxed by a left hook to the chin, prompted the referee to intervene at the 2:53 mark.

"It was brilliant to have someone like him in front of me because he took a lot of shots and he threw them back," said Khan. "I've been a professional for three years and I've no doubt that this year I am going to be a world champion."

Promoter: **Sports Network**

(4-5-08)

Brian Doogan

Librado Andrade KO 8 Robert Stieglitz

Cabazon, California: Nobody will ever accuse Andrade or Stieglitz of having world-class boxing skills, but they do have world-class hearts, and in an alphabet title eliminator in the co-feature to Joel Casamayor vs. Michael Katsidis, the fans at Morongo Casino Resort were treated to a crude but thoroughly enjoyable super middleweight slugfest. Stieglitz

was extremely tough and game, but Andrade was a little tougher and a little more game, not to mention slightly more skillful, and he controlled the action almost the entire way en route to an eighth-round TKO.

Andrade, 165½, La Habra, California, doesn't have much of a jab, but the limited Stieglitz, 166½, Magdeburg, Germany, didn't use a jab either, which allowed Andrade to walk right in throughout round one and land hard uppercuts with both hands. The uppercuts kept scoring in round two, resulting in a bloody nose for the 26-year-old Stieglitz, but he battled back in the final minute, the two fighters trading flush shots to the delight of the crowd.

Stieglitz started to get more business done in the next couple of rounds, particularly the fourth, which was the only round he won on THE RING'S scorecard. Andrade did some damaging bodywork that round, but Stieglitz' straight right repeatedly found a home on Andrade's sturdy but available chin, tilting the round in his favor.

The momentum didn't last long, however, as the 29-year-old Andrade took over for good in the fifth. A counter left hook hurt Stieglitz, and the left uppercut that followed damaged him even more, opening him up for an extended barrage along the ropes at the bell. About one minute into round six, a left to the gut hurt the visiting fighter, prompting him to grab Andrade. The left uppercut came through once again for Andrade later in the round, hurting the bloody Stieglitz and causing him to back into a corner. Andrade moved in for the finish and landed numerous shots, leading ref Ray Corona (USA) to look in closely, but Stieglitz punched back just in time to prevent a stoppage.

Two rounds later, however, Stieglitz could hold off neither Andrade nor the referee. Though the German started the eighth round well, a hard combination of bodyshots hurt him late in the round, and a lashing right hand turned him halfway around. Andrade jumped on him and drove him across the ring, then let loose with 15 unanswered punches, landing 12 of them. With Stieglitz, 31-2 (19), covering up and offering no response, Corona stepped in at the 2:53 mark.

Andrade, 27-1 (20), whose only loss came in an alphabet title try against Mikkel Kessler, is now in line for a fight with IBF beltholder Lucian Bute.

Television: **HBO**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(3-22-08)

Cornelius Bundrage W 10 Kassim Ouma

Salamanca, New York: Any hope of Ouma returning to contender status appears to have evaporated following his unanimous 10-round decision loss to Bundrage at the Seneca Allegheny Casino-Hotel. It was the transplanted Ugandan's third consecutive defeat, and he appears to be a totally different fighter than the one who captured the IBF junior middleweight title in 2004. Gone are the rapid-fire flurries and boundless energy that carried him to the top, and all that remains is a listless journeyman capable of only brief flashes of his former brilliance.

Bundrage, 154, Detroit, Michigan, has met with mixed results since his stint on *The Contender*, but this was his second win since Joel Julio knocked him out in July 2007, and the biggest victory of his career. Part of his battle plan was to nullify Ouma's early efforts by wrapping him in a bearhug every time Ouma tried to get his offense going. It proved an effective strategy, even though it eventually led to referee Steve Smoger (USA) penalizing Bundrage a point in the eighth round. The frequent clinches also made for an ugly fight and quite a lot of booing from the fans in attendance.

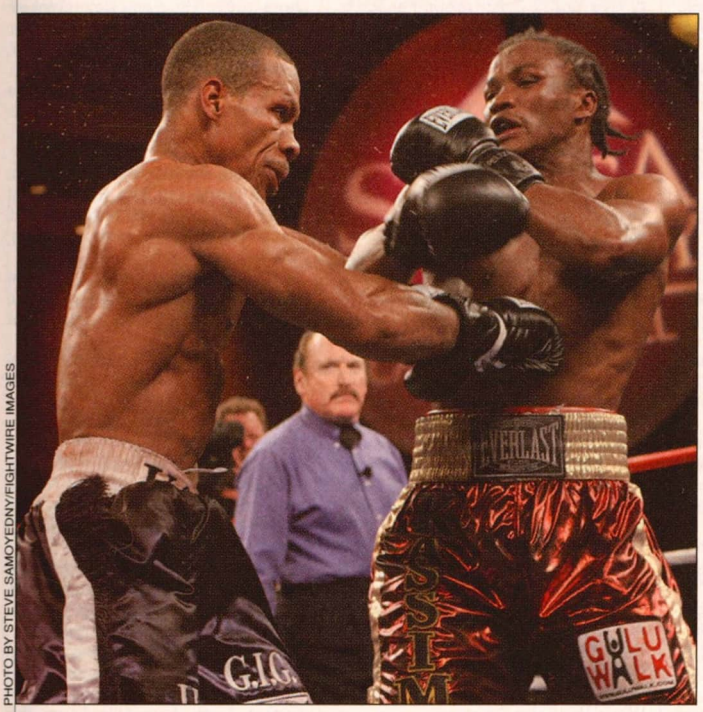
After being out-mauled for the first three rounds, Ouma, 153, West Palm Beach, Florida, briefly showed a spark of life when Bundrage suffered a cut over his left eye following an accidental clash of heads in the fourth. Suddenly, Ouma looked a bit like his former self, and he launched a sustained attack, worsening his foe's wound and also banging away at the body.

With Bundrage, 34, looking unsure of himself, Ouma, 29, continued to press in the fifth and sixth, but as Bundrage's corner gradually staunched the flow of blood, he regained his composure, and Ouma's rally soon petered out.

Down the stretch, Bundrage, 28-3 (16), began to land his right hand on a fairly consistent basis. Ouma, 25-5-1 (15), tried to get back into it the last few rounds, but he never had much success, as Bundrage's counter rights continued to score.

Both judges Julie Lederman (USA) and Don Ackerman (USA) scored it 96-93 for Bundrage, while Ed Scunzio (USA) had it closer at 95-94.

Television: **ESPN2**
Promoter: **Peltz Boxing Promotions**
(3-28-08) ■



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Bundrage accelerates Ouma's downward spiral

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Aug. 1985: Seven Elected To The Ring Hall Of Fame (Jose Napoles, Jake LaMotta, Panama Al Brown, Manuel Ortiz, Young Stribling, Thomas Jackling, Lord Lonsdale). Plus: Spinks-Holmes preview, Barry McGuigan.

Oct. 1985: The "Macho Man" Rides Again. Plus: Jeff Fenech, Berbick-Green, John E. Garcia, Dwight Muhammad Qawi, McCallum-Braxton.

Nov. 1985: Will Hagler Feast On The Beast? Plus: Hagler-Mugabi & Hearns-Shuler previews, Lonnie Smith, Pintor-Meza, Chuck Hull, Benitez-Moley.

Dec. 1985: Michael Spinks: Against All Odds. Plus: Curry-McCrory preview, McGuigan-Taylor, Alexis Arguello, Michael Olajide, Chavez-Pratchett.

Jan. 1986: In Search Of A Heavyweight Champion. Plus: Azumah Nelson, Arguello-Jefferson, Olympic update, Chicago boxing.

May 1986: Hagler vs. Mugabi: Marvelous Marvin Tames The Beast. Plus: Marvin Johnson, McGuigan-Cabrera, Bramble-Crawley, Tyson-Ferguson, 10 worst decisions.

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Sept. 1986: Gerry Cooney vs. Mike Tyson: Who Would Win? Plus: Cruz-McGuigan, Hearns-Medal, Tyson-Gross, Sims-Duran.

Dec. 1986: The Weekend That Shook The Boxing World. Rosario-Bramble & Honeyghan-Curry. Plus: Butch Lewis interview, Buster Drayton, Hector Camacho, Jake LaMotta.

June 1987: Vinny Paz: Phenom Or Phony? Plus: Tyson-Bonecrusher, Mark Breland, Brian Mitchell, Evander Holyfield, Czyz-Edwards, Olajide-Lee, Curry-Montgomery.

July 1987: Spinks-Cooney: The Fight That Refused To Die. Plus: The new Ring ratings, Terry Marsh, George Foreman's return, Khaosai Galaxy, Hearns-Andries, Whitaker-Mayweather.

Sept. 1987: Michael Olajide: The Look Of The Future? Plus: Tyson-Thomas, Jeff Fenech, middleweight muddle, Tsuyoshi Hamada, Juan Roldan, Harold Knight.

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Feb. 1988: Gold Outshines Glitter: Tate Tops Olajide. Plus: Tyson-Biggs, Kalambay-Barkley, Hearns-Roldan, fights we'd like to see.

March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

April 1988: Evander Holyfield: Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Special year-end awards, Holyfield-Qawi II, Foreman-Sekorski, Hill-Angulo.

May 1988: George Foreman: "I Can Beat Tyson." Plus: Tyson-Holmes, Jesse Benavides, Showtime, no-knockout artists.

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Oct. 1988: Mike Tyson: What Price Glory? Plus: Tyson-Spinks, Hearns-Barkley, Davey Moore.

Nov. 1988: Donny Lalonde: "Sugar Ray is Out Of His Mind!" Plus: Hall of Fame selections (Carlos Ortiz, Joe Brown, Billy Graham, Cus D'Amato, Jimmy Jacobs), Nunn-Tate, Molinares-Starling, Honeyghan-Chung, '88 Olympians.

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Nov. 1996: Pole-Axed! Low Blows, Sinking Bowe, Ugly Show. Plus: Bowe-Golota I, Blinky Palermo, exciting fighters, Winky Wright, Joe Brown.

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 (Continued from Page 24)

ping all of his opponents by using his range and powerful right hand. But Jones is the first to tell you he doesn't consider himself a powerpuncher.

The source of his power, he maintains, is a combination of speed and accuracy. He also has sneaky hands, the kind that come from odd angles with devastating effect. Most knockout artists like to stalk. Jones prefers to stay back and have opponents come to him.

"People see 12 knockouts in 12 fights and think I can finish guys, but I don't have Joe Frazier- or George Foreman-like one-punch power," Jones said. "I'll catch you when you're trying to catch me. My game is finding the right spot to hit you. I'm a perfectionist. If I screw up, I'm beating myself up before anyone says a word to me."

Hall of Fame promoter J Russell Peltz has an exceptionally keen eye for talent. It didn't take him long to notice Jones' potential, especially after being invited to see his pro debut against Jason Thompson, a 2005 New York City Golden Gloves champion in his second pro bout. Jones stopped Thompson in the second round of their scheduled four-rounder.

After that, Peltz didn't need to be convinced Jones had the kind of exciting style and ability to one day become a champion.

The eight-round decision over Sanders (winning by scores of 78-74 on all three cards) was the longest of Jones' brief pro career. Prior to Sanders, Jones' longest fight went five rounds. He had only lost a round, according to Peltz, dropping the second during his 12th fight, against Israel Cardona. But "The Machine Gun" made up for it by stopping Cardona in the third.

"The Cardona fight was supposed to be Jones' first real test," Peltz said. "That's why I was not worried about the Sanders fight. I know Mike has the gas, the stamina, and the conditioning to go eight rounds. There's nothing there that can't be corrected. My problem with Mike that night was, for all his confidence, his game plan didn't flow; he was tense."

Aside from Peltz, Jones is surrounded by a sound team that has known him since he was a 15-year-old amateur training at Joe Frazier's Gym in North Philly. The grand plan of Jones' trainer, Vaughn Jackson, and co-managers Doc Nowicki and Jim Williams, is for Jones to contend for a minor belt by the end of 2008 and hunt for something larger by early-'09.

To keep that path intact, Team Jones has to avoid career bumps like the Sanders fight, a victory that came at a price, the tag being that Jones might not be as good as advertised.

Jackson knew going in that there could be problems. He sensed it in training camp leading up to the fight. Call it a team lesson.

"We were a little overconfident about Sanders and his ability. Mike thought he could just go in there and blow the guy out," Jackson said. "We learned we have to dictate the pace of a fight, because it's something we didn't do against Sanders. The bottom line is, Mike is going to be okay. He was in control and he won. We move forward."

Against Sanders, 27-6 (17), Jones looked wooden, unable to sidestep punches. He mulled over the Sanders fight for a few days, and then he was right back in the gym.

No one likes to revisit a bad night, but it's good to know, Peltz and Nowicki noted, that Jones is willing to listen and grow. "I think [ESPN2 ringside analyst] Teddy Atlas made a good point during my fight with Sanders: I need to be able to be on offense and defense at the same time," Jones said. "It's either one or the other with me. I'm punching or I'm getting punched. I got hit with two of those left hooks from Sanders right in the chin. I saw what I did wrong on tape, like when I pulled out with my hands down. He caught me. I promise you, you'll never see those same mistakes again." ■

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

The undefeated Jones looks down at the fallen Richard Hall during "The Machine Gun's" first-round blowout victory in October 2007 in Philadelphia.

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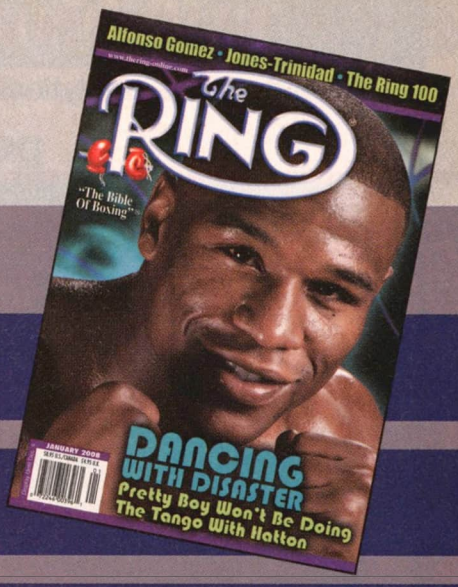

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WBC Lightweight Title

Manny Pacquiao

Main Event 12 Rounds

David Diaz

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

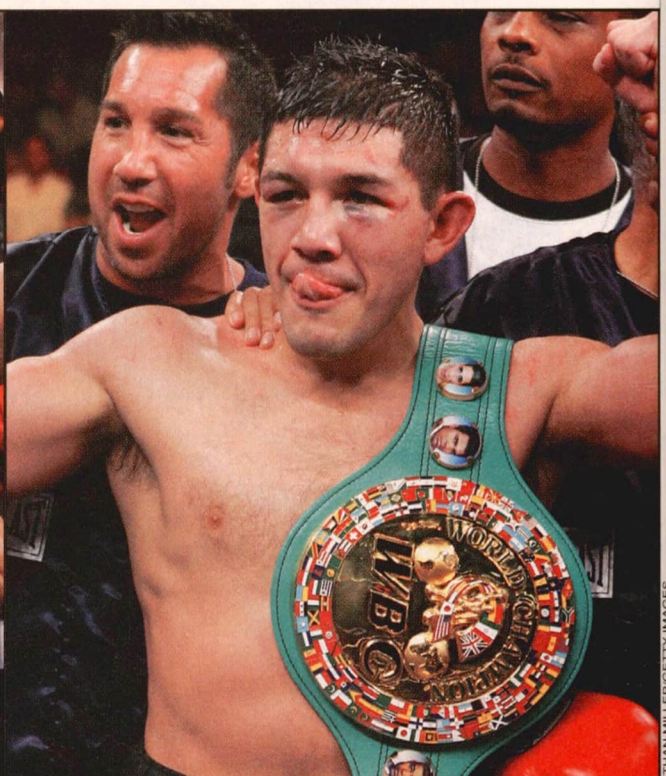


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Even the best boxers can't fight superfights every time out, which is why, as much as we would like to see a third installment to the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez series, we get Pacquiao against David Diaz on June 28 in Las Vegas instead.

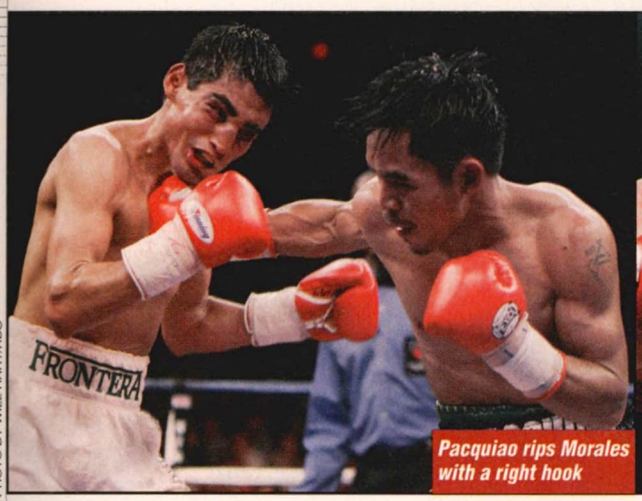
This was going to happen whether or not we liked it, and really, it's not a bad little fight. Diaz, while under-skilled and a bit underpowered, is a tough, confident brawler who happens, not unimportantly, to have an alphabet strap that Pacquiao would like to own. Not because of its plastic baubles or pretty green faux leather, but because it represents a title at 135 pounds. If Pacquiao can win a belt at lightweight, it only adds to his already lustrous resume.

A win at lightweight also, if only theoretically, keeps open the almost surreal possibility of a Pacquiao-Oscar De La Hoya fight down the road somewhere. But, first things first: Diaz isn't a walk in the park for anyone at 135, and he'd like to line up some big money fights for himself.

Manny Pacquiao

David Diaz

Record and World Rating



Pacquiao rips Morales with a right hook

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

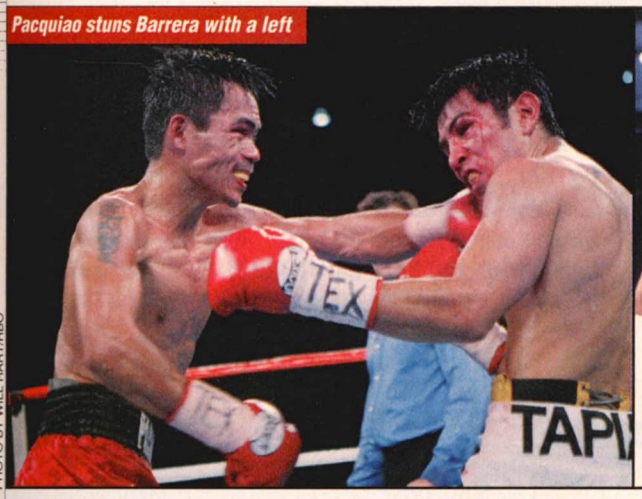
Diaz slams a left into Santa Cruz

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Is 46-3-2 with 35 knockouts ... Was on the Philippines amateur team and reportedly compiled a record of 60-4 ... Turned pro at 16 at 105 pounds in 1995 ... Won his first 11 fights before getting stopped in the third round ... Won WBC flyweight title in December 1998, made one successful defense, and then lost belt in September '99 fight ... Won the IBF super bantamweight title in '02, the world featherweight title in '03, and the world junior lightweight title in March '08 ... Recognized as world junior lightweight champion by THE RING.

Is 34-1-1 with 17 knockouts ... Compiled an impressive 175-16 amateur record, winning the Chicago Golden Gloves four times and the National Golden Gloves three times ... Won a berth on the 1996 United States Olympic team, where he lost in the second round ... Turned pro in 1996 and won 26 straight before suffering stoppage loss ... Has not lost since ... Won the WBC lightweight title in 2007 and has made one successful defense ... Is rated second at lightweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Pacquiao stuns Barrera with a left

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

A Diaz right has Julio's head spinning

PHOTO BY STEVE MATTEO

Is 29 years old ... Stands 5'6½" with a 67-inch reach ... Excellent hand and foot speed and head-numbing punching power with both hands ... Has shown excellent chin after suffering two early-career kayo losses ... Has a history of cutting around eyes.

Is 31 years old ... Stands 5'6" with a 69-inch reach ... Has squat, stocky build with a very wide back and muscular legs ... Is tireless, always applying pressure ... Physically very strong but slow of both hand and foot ... Has shown tendency to swell and bleed.

Manny Pacquiao

David Diaz

Best Weapons

Pacquiao rams a right into Marquez' jaw

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Morales' left shoulder takes the brunt of a Diaz left

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Southpaw style animated by scorching straight left and, to a lesser but still dangerous degree, the right hook ... Improved bodypuncher, especially with right hook ... Punches from all angles and knows how to finish ... Throws some of the best combinations in the game.

Busy, high-volume style with strong left cross and wide-open offense ... At his best coming forward and mauling, but can get away with staying outside ... Good bodypuncher ...Very hard to hurt ... Is always in excellent condition, gets stronger in later rounds.

Previous Fight

Scored a razor-thin split decision victory over Juan Manuel Marquez in overdue rematch of their thrilling draw in 2003 ... Started quickly, dropping Marquez with a left in the third, but couldn't sustain the momentum ... Boxed more than usual, allowing Marquez back into fight ... Slowed down noticeably over middle rounds and was cut under right eye, which later required 16 stitches to close ... Hurt Marquez badly in the 10th and did just enough over last two rounds to salvage mildly controversial victory by scores of 114-113, 115-112, and 112-115.

Pounded out 10-round majority decision over journeyman Ramon Montano in non-title fight underneath Pacquiao-Marquez II ... Most observers felt decision should have been unanimous ... After slow start, outworked and outslugged ponderous Montano all the way through, but never came appreciably close to scoring stoppage ... Was hit a lot and was generally unimpressive while posting win by scores of 99-91, 97-93, and 95-95.

Quality of Opposition

Has fought all of the best fighters at his weight, almost every time with positive results ... Three of his more recent opponents are almost certain future Hall of Famers ... Wins over Marco Antonio Barrera (KO 11, W 12) stand out, as do second and third meetings with Erik Morales (KO 10 and KO 3) ... Bouts with Marquez (D 12, W 12) complete trifecata against era's best junior featherweight-to-junior lightweight fighters ... Recent wins over Jorge Solis (KO 8), Oscar Larois (W 12), and Hector Velazquez (KO 6) aren't shabby either.

Has nowhere near the resume Pacquiao boasts ... Only very accomplished opponent was faded Erik Morales (W 12) ... Has faced a few respected mid-level guys in Jose Armando Santa Cruz (KO 10), Kendall Holt (KO by 8), and Jaime Rangel (KO 9) ... Also has win over celebrated trialhorse Emanuel Augustus (W 8), Jamie Rangel (KO 9), and Ener Julio (KO 10).

Defense

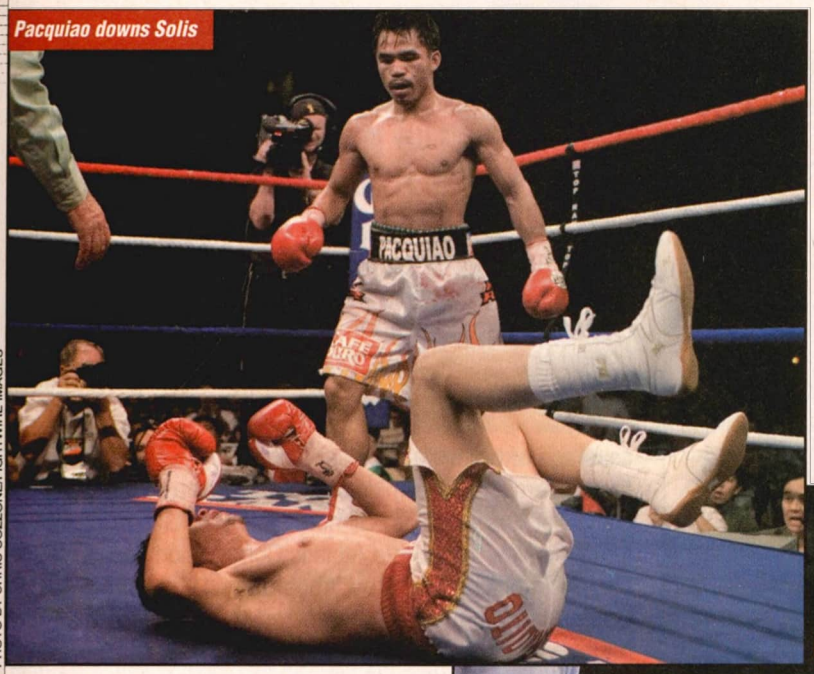
Is so committed to offense that defense is mostly an afterthought ... Still, excellent reflexes and athleticism make him hard to tag cleanly when he is on ... Doesn't block many punches, preferring to slip them while charging in ... Is perfectly willing to take some to deliver some ... Threat of knockout his best defense.

Not his strong suit ... Has ordinary head movement and mobility ... Keeps right hand high when on the way in, but wide open southpaw offense creates all kinds of openings for opponents ... Not hard to find on the outside ... Susceptible to getting tagged on the way in.

Manny Pacquiao

David Diaz

Style



Pacquiao downs Solis

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

For most of his career has been unpredictable buzzsaw, surprising opponents with razor sharp combinations and powerpunches thrown from unexpected angles ... Tremendous southpaw punching power and speed permit him to get lazy on defense, to his detriment ... Last several fights have seen a more patient, cerebral style, which reduces his effectiveness.

Mauling, straight-ahead approach doesn't often make for pretty fights, but it's been effective ... Uses his strength to push opponents back so he can get inside and land overhand lefts and right hooks ... Doesn't carry one-punch power, so relies on his conditioning and strength to wear down opponents over the distance.

Diaz saves himself with this knockdown of Santa Cruz

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

The Questions

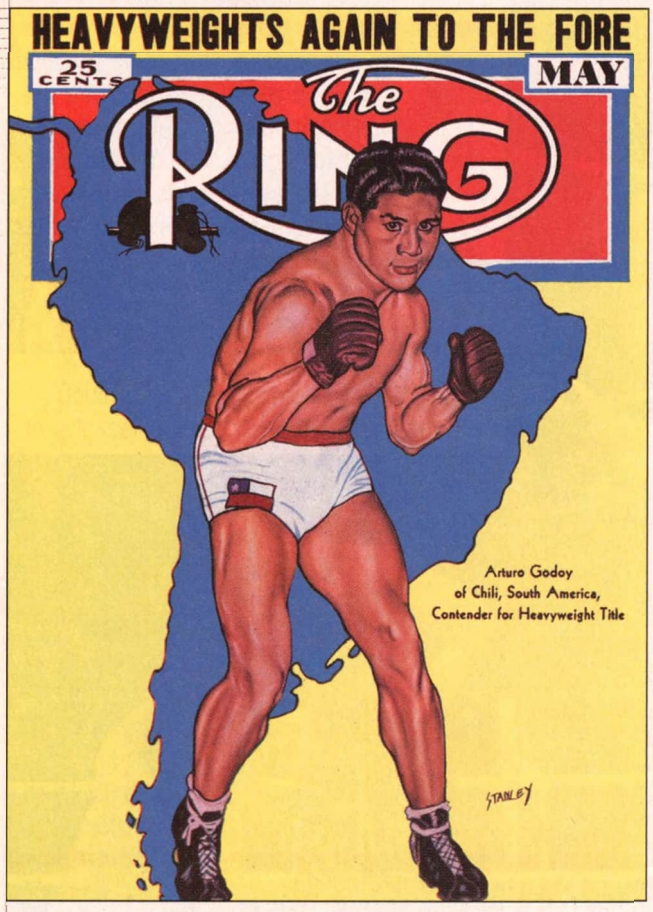
Are all the hard fights, particularly the last one with Marquez, starting to catch up with him? Will the tender skin around his eyes bust open again? How will he handle fighting at 135 pounds, after starting his career at 105? If he finds he can't hurt Diaz, will he try to outbox him? Can he?

Does he have the defensive skill he'll need to avoid getting busted up by Pacquiao's sharp punches? If he doesn't, can he withstand Pacquiao's power? Will he be intimidated by the large crowd support for Pacquiao, or by facing one of the very best fighters in the world?

The Outcome

Both fighters will appear respectful early on, with Pacquiao trying to box from a distance and Diaz not knowing quite how to get close enough to land. He'll start taking chances around the fourth or fifth round and soon find himself getting hammered with right hooks and left hands as Pacquiao's great speed advantage tells. Diaz will soldier on a bloody mess until the 10th, when the fight is stopped on cuts.

May 1940



COVER STORY: "Godoy Heads List" by Ed Van Every explains why Arturo Godoy was the number-one contender for Joe Louis' heavyweight title. The reason was actually straightforward: Godoy had held Louis to a 15-round split decision in a February title fight, and although most of the media agreed with the official decision, the rough-hewed Chilean had given a good enough account of himself to earn a rematch in June.

World Champions

(For the period ended March 11, 1940)
Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: Billy Conn
Middleweight: Vacant
Welterweight: Henry Armstrong
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Joey Archibald
Bantamweight: Vacant
Flyweight: Vacant

Godoy was managed by Al Weill, who, along with trainer Whitey Bimstein, thought he'd figured out the recipe to beat Louis. "Louis has to aim before he can shoot," Weill told Godoy. "When Louis aims, move, and he can't pull the trigger."

The battle plan, along with Godoy's sturdy chin, had worked well enough the first time for Godoy to extend Louis the distance. But when he faced "The Brown Bomber" in the rematch, the South American was knocked down twice in the eighth round and stopped.

"Hank Proves His Mettle" is Eddie Borden's coverage of welterweight champion Henry Amstrong's bid to take a version of the middleweight title away from Ceferino Garcia at Los Angeles' Gilmore Stadium. Garcia had captured the New York State Athletic Commission version of the title by knocking out Fred Apostoli in 1939, but only the California commission recognized the Garcia-Armstrong return bout as being for the middleweight championship.

Armstrong had beaten Garcia via 15-round decision in defense of the 147-pound title in 1938, but Filipino subsequently moved up in weight, so the rematch was for Garcia's belt, which he retained with a questionable 15-round draw. Although Borden, like most of the writers covering the event, thought Armstrong won the fight, he did not advocate a rubber match.

"It would be useless to stage any more meetings between Garcia and Armstrong," he wrote. "Every time they meet, it is a grueling test of physical stamina and courage, and the toll extracted from these engagements is not worth it. Armstrong can still make the lightweight limit and it is

Armstrong and Garcia greet each other after grueling draw

foolish to test his ability against opponents who outweigh him from 12 to 15 pounds."

Although Garcia and Armstrong never fought each other again, Borden's assessment proved prophetic nonetheless. By the end of the year, Armstrong was burnt out from too many tough fights, often against larger men, and lost the welterweight title to Fritzie Zivic.

"From All Walks Of Life" by writer/illustrator Ted Carroll delves into the various occupations and activities from which boxing draws its participants.

"Almost every known trade and quite a number of professions have made contributions to the collection of ambitious young pugilists who make up the ranks of the army of hopefuls seeking fame and fortune in the ring," writes Carroll, who then goes on to provide numerous examples.

Corbett looks more like a bank clerk than a fighter

Some, such as Jim Corbett's early career as a bank clerk, are well known. But did you know that Joe Louis once labored at the Ford plant in Detroit, or that Bob Pastor played fullback for New York University before dropping out to box professionally?

Carroll also noted the old habit of nicknaming fighters after their former profession: "Fireman" Jim Flynn, Fred "The Pallid Plasterer" Fulton, and Jim "The Boilermaker" Jeffries are a few of the examples cited.

"Canadian Topic" by Lawson Bampton featured the 15-round draw between Georgie Pace and Lou Salica for the vacant National Boxing Commission and New York State Athletic Commission's version of the bantamweight title in front of 8,000 fans at Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto.

"The battle was close and hard-fought throughout the 15 rounds," wrote Bampton. "The Veteran New Yorker, swarming to the attack with both hands, had the support of most of the fans at the finish, but ringsiders thought that Pace's telling counters entitled him to the edge. It will likely result in a return bout."

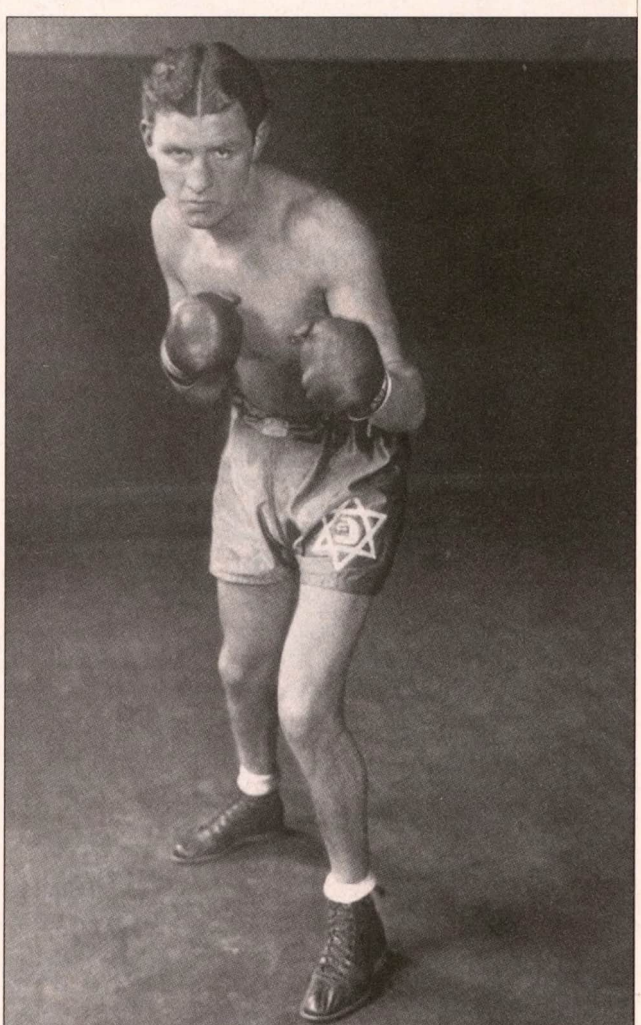
Bampton was correct in his assumption: Salica and Pace fought again in September, with Salica winning the vacant title via 15-round decision in New York City.

"In Sunny California" by Harry E. Winkler makes note of an interesting sparring session in which a member of the press got his comeuppance.

"Cal Whorton, a sportswriter on the *Los Angeles Times*, donned the gloves with Henry Armstrong to get 'material' for a story. He got it. After two minutes of sparring, during which time the scribe had been dizzied with a left hook and put on the seat of his pants with a short right, said he 'never again would I call a fighter a bum.'"

"Timely Chatter From Wartime Great Britain" by John S. Sharpe reveals that despite being at war with Germany, Britain continued to stage regular cards. Among the famous fighters in action was Jackie "Kid" Berg, who won "narrow" decisions over Harry Davis in London and George Reynolds in Bristol.

The highlight of the month, however, was 34-year-old Nel Tarlington's decision over Johnny Cusick at Liverpool Stadium to win the Empire and British featherweight titles. The card was staged on behalf of the War Relief Fund, and Tarlington donated the trophy he won to be auctioned and the proceeds added to charity's coffers. ■



Berg was still keeping busy in 1940

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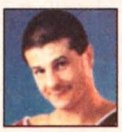
★ Azumah Nelson
★ Buddy McGirt
★ Pernell Whitaker
★ Barry McGuigan
★ "Irish" Micky Ward
★ Carlos Palomino
★ Sir Henry Cooper
★ Erik Morales
★ Vito Antuofermo
★ Angelo Dundee
★ Angel Manfredy
★ Danny "Little Red" Lopez
★ Terry Norris
★ Johnny Tapia
★ Virgil Hill
★ Gene Fullmer
★ Acelino "Popo" Freitas
★ Hector "Macho" Camacho
★ Andy Lee

MORALES

WARD



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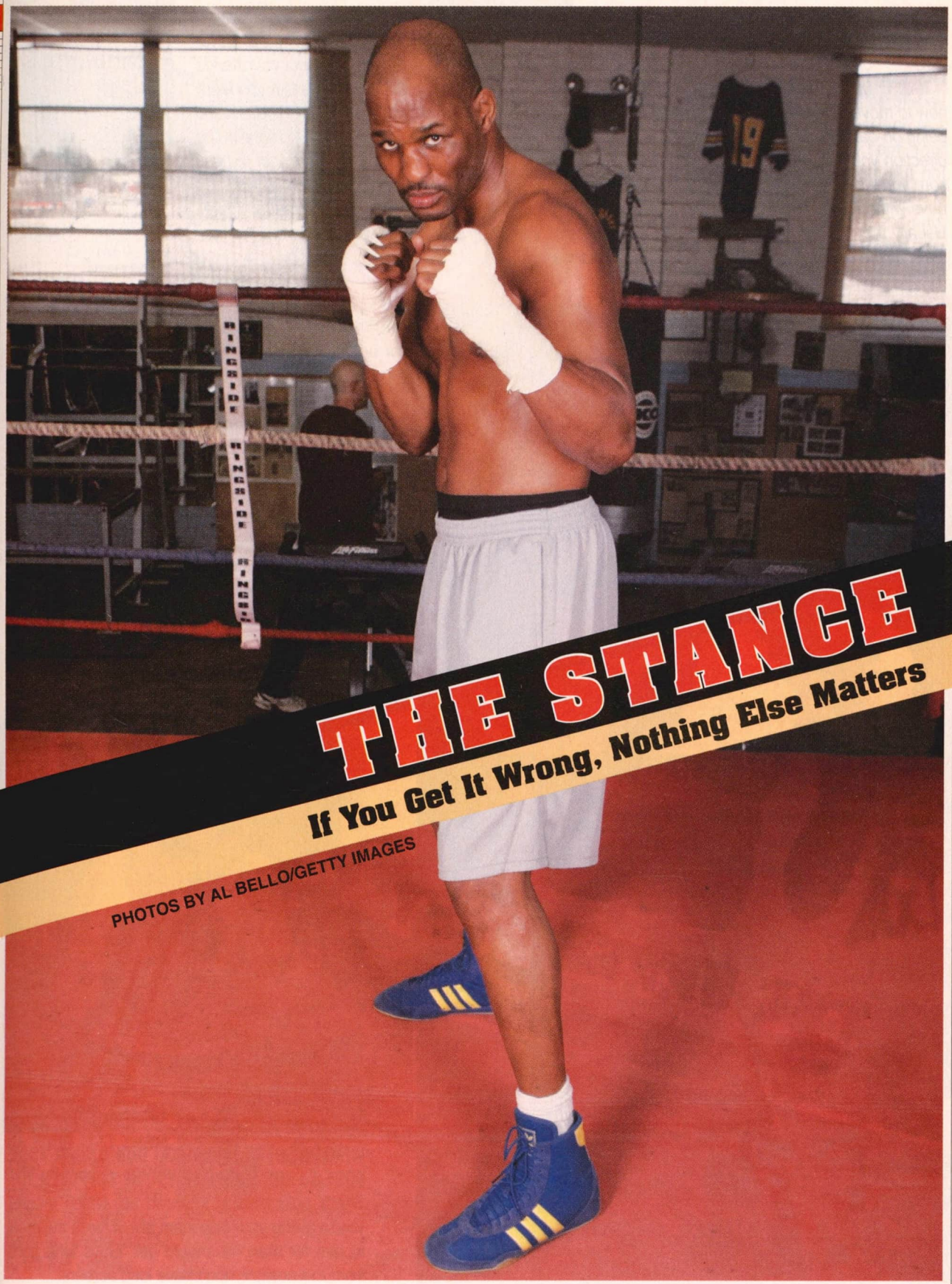


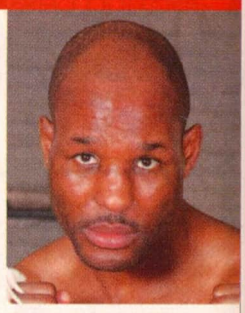
THE STANCE

If You Get It Wrong, Nothing Else Matters

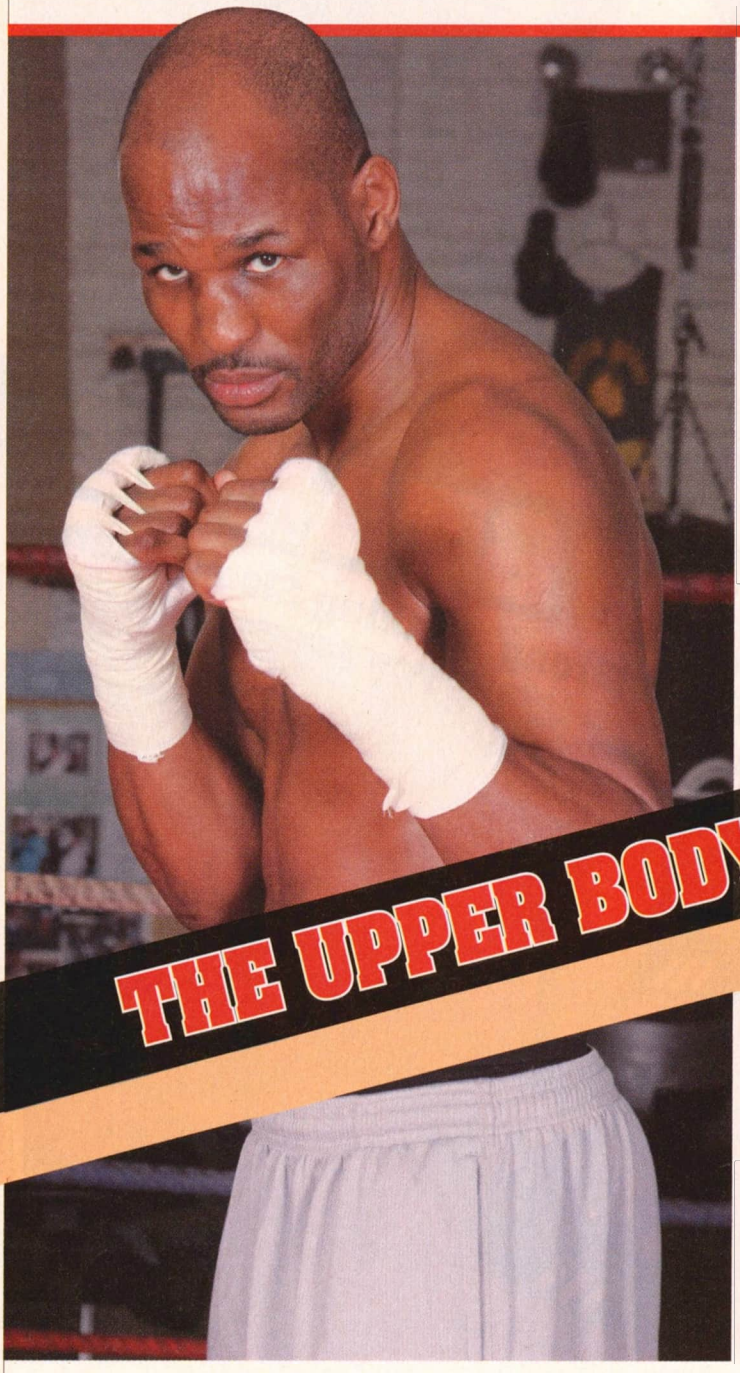
PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

ALL PHOTOS WERE TAKEN AT ANDY CARR'S GYM IN UPPER DARBY, PENNSYLVANIA.

There's nothing more important when you first start boxing than knowing the right way to stand in the ring. It sounds obvious, but you have to learn it and know it. A lot of guys, before they get in the ring, think you just stand the way you normally do and put your hands up. But there's a lot more to it than that, and before you do anything else—before you learn how to move, how to punch, how to duck—you have to know how to stand the right way. That means being on-balance at all times, being ready to punch or to get out of the way, being able to move in the direction you have to, to counter, everything. Things happen fast in the ring and if you're not in position, you'll be in trouble. If you don't think it's that important, think about the times you've watched guys without a lot of know-how and experience get in the ring and get wiped out by a better fighter. Usually they had bad balance or their chin was up in the air or their hands were down around their waist all the time. They never learned the right stance.

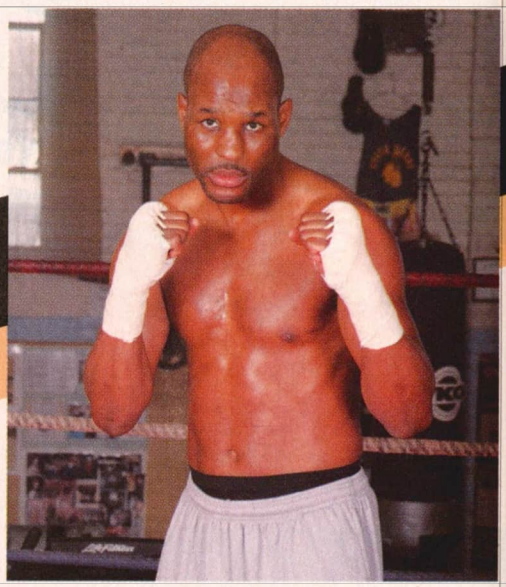


BERNARD HOPKINS
Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.

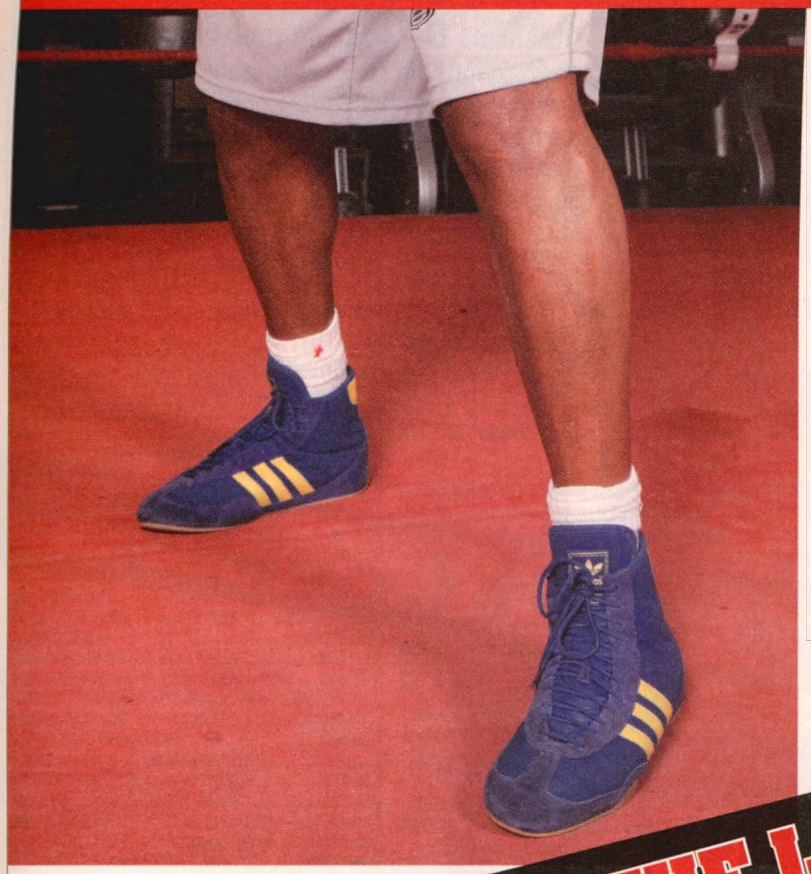


THE UPPER BODY

THIS IS THE CORRECT STANCE (for a right-handed or orthodox fighter; for a southpaw the body position is reversed) and it's designed to protect me. Notice that my chin is tucked down against my chest—that's to make it a harder target. My elbows are tucked in to protect my ribs from bodyshots. My whole body is turned sideways to the right so I'm a smaller target for my opponent. Both hands are held just below chin level and my left is farther out than my right. That's because the left hand is like my ruler—my stick. I can do anything with that left hand, for offense or defense. But we'll get to more of that later.

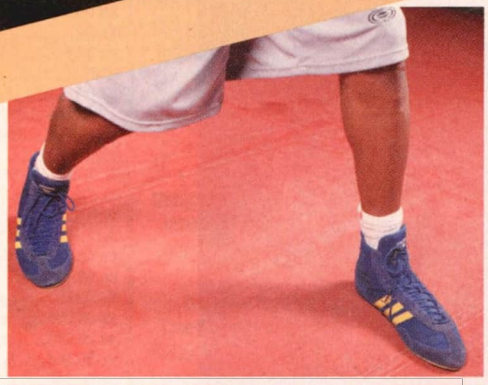


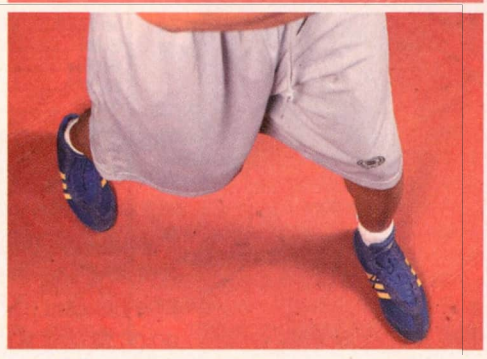
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU DON'T TURN YOUR BODY TO THE SIDE, LIKE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO? That's called being squared up, which means you're giving your opponent about twice the area to aim for than he should get. Guys who fight from this position don't have long careers.



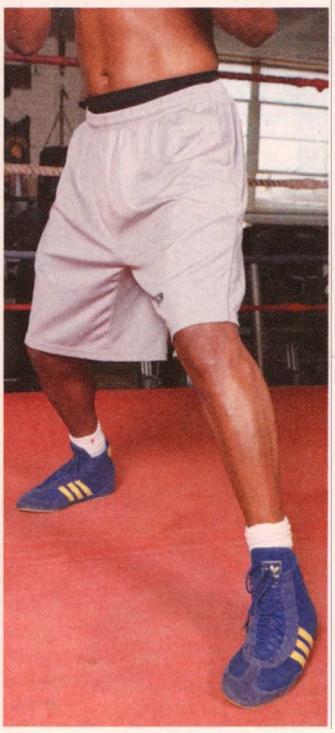
HAVING YOUR FEET IN THE RIGHT PLACE IS AS IMPORTANT AS KEEPING YOUR HANDS UP. In fact it's more important because if your feet aren't where they should be, you'll be off-balance. Your left foot is in front (unless you're a southpaw) and your knees slightly bent. Your feet are pointed slightly to the right but not too much. You want it so that your weight is evenly distributed between your left and right legs. Keeping your feet this way allows you to move forward or backward when you need to without giving up your stance or messing up your balance.

THE LOWER BODY

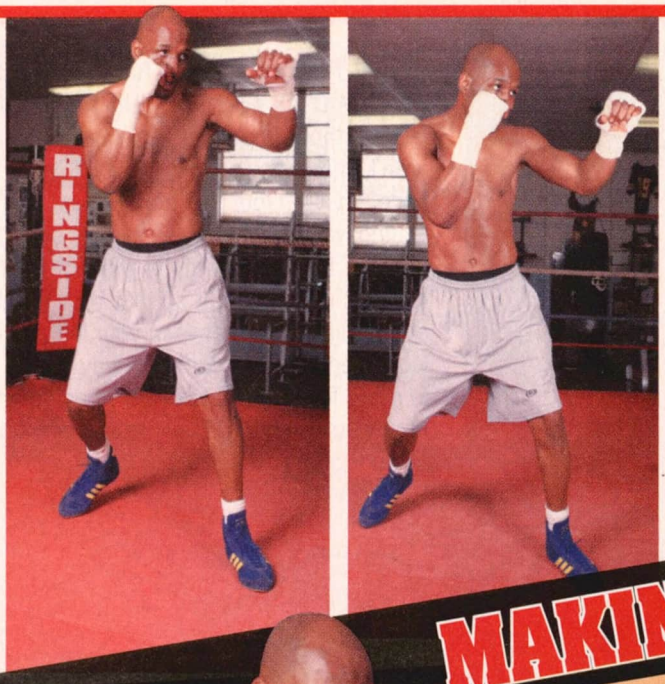




THE RIGHT PLACEMENT OF YOUR FEET FROM TWO ANGLES: from the front and above. Notice that the right heel is raised slightly off the canvas.



DON'T SPREAD YOUR LEGS TOO FAR AND PUT ALL YOUR WEIGHT ON YOUR BACK LEG. We call this "having a foot in the bucket" and guys (Roy Jones for example) do it when they want to punch and get out of the way at the same time.



THE THINGS THAT MAKE UP YOUR STANCE—chin down, hands up, elbows in, feet in the right position—don't change just because you start moving around the ring. You have to maintain that fundamental position all the time, whether you're standing still waiting to counter or getting in position to land some punches. It's especially important when you're moving forward to keep that same position so that you're protecting yourself at all times. Keep your hands up, your chin down, and don't let your feet get too much closer to one another than they would if you were in your regular stance standing still.

MAKING YOUR MOVE

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS when you forget where your feet are when you're coming in and they get too close together. If your opponent hits you when your feet are like this, you're going down whether you're hurt or not, and that's going to cost you.

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SAMPLE

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

It Pays To Be A Ring Physician In Nevada

Being a Nevada ring physician was never about the perks—that is, until recently.

Most state commissions have a permanent medical roster. Holding more than 50 boxing and mixed martial arts cards per year, Nevada has only 12 physicians (eight in southern Nevada, four in the north.) Ohio, where there are fewer fights, has 40 doctors with 12 working most of the events. New York boasts 26 highly trained medical specialists.

It is common for many commissions to rely heavily on a few with expertise. But the competition for licensure is fierce in Nevada, and at least 10 of its doctors are capable of being in charge of any fight card.

Historically, being a Nevada ring physician was not a moneymaking proposition. The pay scale would run approximately $200-$250 for a club show; $450-$650 for a major fight card. This is comparable to states like Pennsylvania, which compensates doctors $300 per show, and Ohio that pays $250 plus travel mileage for televised fights.

In 2005, a few doctors lobbied the commission to advance their fees. Suddenly, physicians were garnering up to $1,000 per show. In the same year, then-commission chairman Raymond Avansino informed ring physicians they would be given an "equal" opportunity to work ringside at major fights once they had gained appropriate experience.

As a former ring physician, I know the job is tough—long hours, instantaneous decisions, accepting liability in the event of a ring death. Nevertheless, I was very much against the pay increase. You work in boxing because you love it, not because you want to supplement your income. Money and ego has contributed to Nevada's negative working atmosphere and unseemly competition for ringside assignments.

In anticipation of this article, THE RING reviewed the Nevada State Athletic Commission's (NSAC) website con-

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Dr. William Berliner checks Fernando Vargas' cut

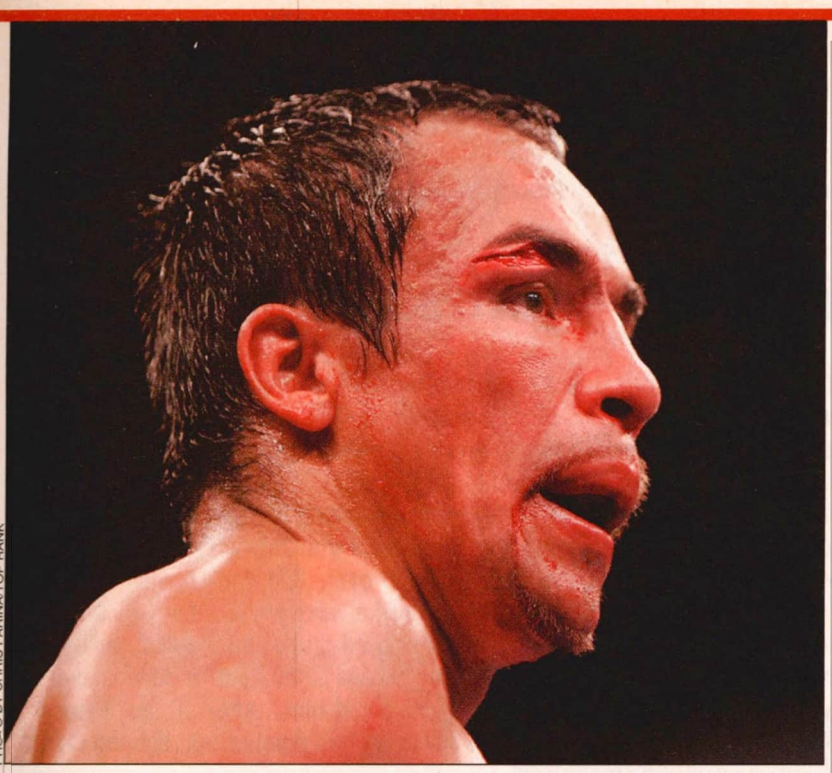


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Did Marquez' cutman do more harm than good?

taining physician assignments, and a fee schedule was obtained from Executive Director Keith Kizer.

Between January 1 and March 31, 2008, only five physicians have been assigned ringside to major fight cards, while others work in the dressing rooms conducting post-fight physicals or are not assigned at all. Some doctors have made over $7,000, while others have collected nothing.

Kizer and the NSAC staff could argue these assignments relate to availability, and that some of these physicians reside outside of Las Vegas. But that is a copout. Those outside Vegas are willing to bear the expense of travel, but are frequently assigned so late that they cannot secure a hotel room. Ring experience could be used as a point of contention, but many of the underused doctors have lengthy credentials and have been ring physicians much longer than those receiving the choice assignments.

Why the disparity in assignments?

The truth is that a couple of Nevada physicians have created a situation that inevitably controls assignments by establishing a close relationship with certain commissioners, office staff, promoters, and athletes. This questions their objectivity and can affect fight outcomes.

Federal law stipulates that, "No member or employee of a boxing commission, no person who administers or enforces State boxing laws, and no member of the Association of Boxing Commissions may belong to, contract with, or receive compensation from any person who sanctions, arranges, or promotes professional boxing matches or who has financial interest in an active boxer currently registered with a boxer registry."

When the issue of physician conflicts of interest was discussed before the ABC legal committee on October 3, 2007, Kizer resigned from the committee, dissenting, he claimed, because ringside physicians do not "administer or enforce" boxing laws and, as a result, are not subject to the "Conflict of Interest" provisions of Federal Law.

This is a questionable stance, as Nevada statute clearly stipulates that a ring physician may have no involvement with fighters other than during the confines of a fight, unless while administering emergency care.

According to Pennsylvania Executive Director Greg Sirb, Pennsylvania law prohibits officials from having direct or indirect financial or pecuniary interest in any boxer. If a physician does treat a boxer other than ringside, they must disclose that relationship, and Sirb may not use them to work a particular fighter's bout.

One mixed martial arts company, regulated by the NSAC, has recently held events in Europe. On several occasions, they have hired two of Nevada's ring physicians to oversee these fights, even though these individuals hold no medical licenses in these countries. The doctors receive first-class travel and board. They are then allowed to work fights for these promoters in Nevada. Although MMA isn't technically regulated under federal law, Nevada statute applies to all forms of unarmed combat.

Nevada ringside medical care has been in trouble for some time, although the media and public at large have not been privy to the situation. Besides numerous conflicts, no written protocols are in place to handle urgent medical situations. Moreover, during the March 15, 2008, Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez fight, the ring physician either missed or allowed Marquez' trainer to leave an epinephrine-soaked string inside a cut. This endangered Marquez' eye more than the injury.

Recently, southern Nevada's medical care has been a topic for national media when a few clinics exposed over 40,000 patients to Hepatitis B/C, and HIV from reusing syringes on multiple patients. Nevada's governor, Jim Gibbons, has been slow to act, and when he did, it has been argued his response was inadequate to handle the crisis.

Governor Gibbons, who appoints the athletic commission, needs to restore public confidence by insuring that ring physicians are not in violation of state or federal law.

If Nevada has somehow determined it is not a conflict for ring physicians to receive perks and travel from select promoters, this must be offered to *all* ring physicians, and not just a select few physicians who are frequently in the driver's seat determining fight outcomes, where many stand to benefit. ■

By Jim Bagg

"Money" Mayweather's Mainstream Mania

You may recall that several months ago, the Baggarooney ripped Floyd Mayweather a new one for participating in *Dancing With The Stars*, His Baggyness decreeing emphatically that fighters and dancing go together like tofu and Jack Daniel's. Well, it wasn't long before Mayweather took it a step farther by rolling around on the ground in a fake fight with a 441-pound spandex-clad monster, showing that when it comes to involvement in activities unfit for real men, he knows no limits. (And before you chime in with the obvious whine "but Joe Louis rassled," remember that "The Brown Bomber" did it because he had no choice. Mayweather *volunteered* to jump on a sweaty giant's back and put him in a sleeperhold.)

Mayweather's defense all along has been that he's going "outside the box," that he's making himself more mainstream, that he's crossing over. And you know what? The Baggster must admit, that's a valid way to steer your career.

But it's also a not-so-well-disguised way of saying, "I want nothing to do with Miguel Cotto, and I'll do whatever it takes to avoid him." After all, as "Money" Mayweather has pointed out, fighting Cotto won't snag him as many eyeballs and press clippings as dancing on ABC or popping The Big Show with some brass knuckles. To those of us who are paying close attention, those knuckles were there to compensate for two pieces of Mayweather's anatomy that clearly are not made of brass. But to Mayweather's way of thinking, earning hard money against Cotto when there's so much easy money to be made is foolish. And maybe he's right.

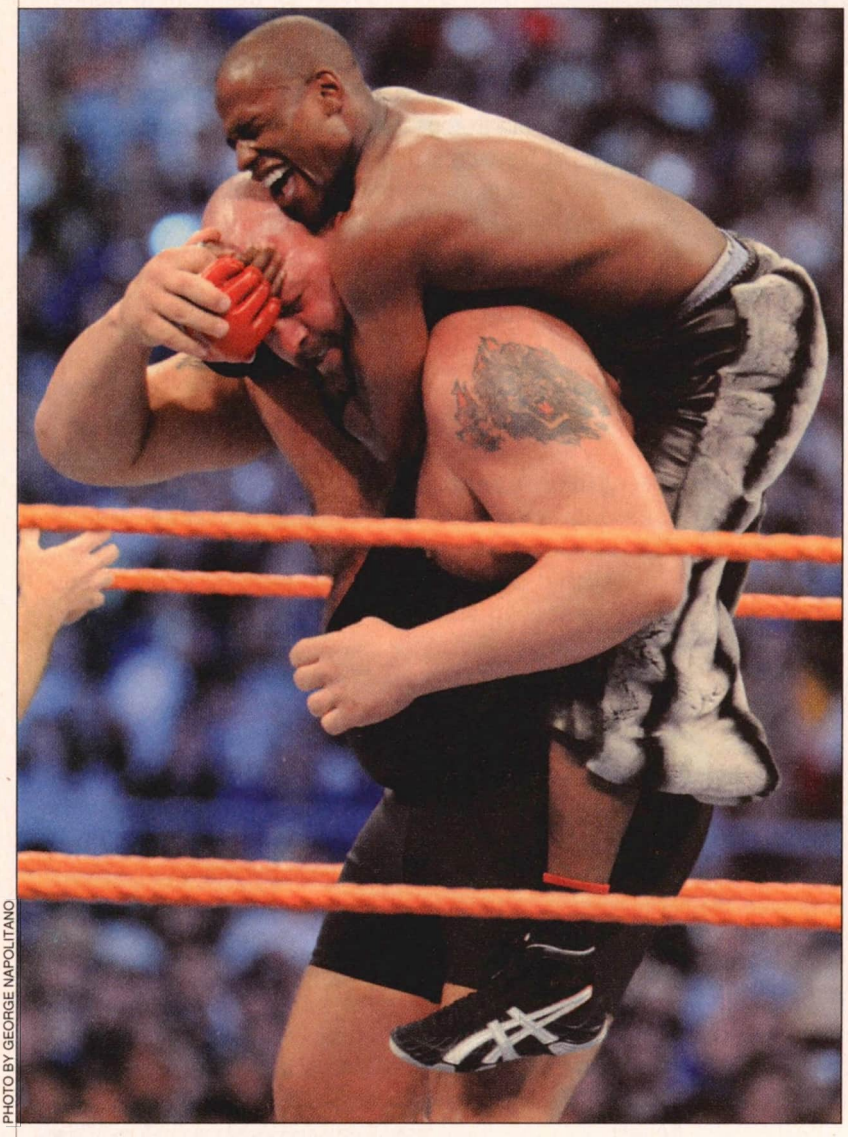


PHOTO BY GEORGE NAPOLITANO

"Pretty Boy" rides Big Show to mainstream success

So guess what, Floyd: The Baggnocchio is done butting heads with you; he's ready to play along. You want to keep expanding your mainstream portfolio instead of cleaning up your division? Well, here are some suggestions from the Baggzini on ways to get outside the box instead of doing the one thing you're actually good at, boxing on the outside:

Run for political office: It worked wonders for your hero, Jesse Ventura, and lots of contemporary fighters have tried it, including Vitali Klitschko, Manny Pacquiao, and now Joe Mesi. You'll be off to a great start, Floyd, because the Baggabush already has some campaign slogans picked out: "Much more sane than your average Mayweather." "Erasing the deficit with what's lying around on my dining room table." "Considering my stance on 'slave wages,' just imagine what I'll do about the minimum wage."

You have to admit, "Mayor Money

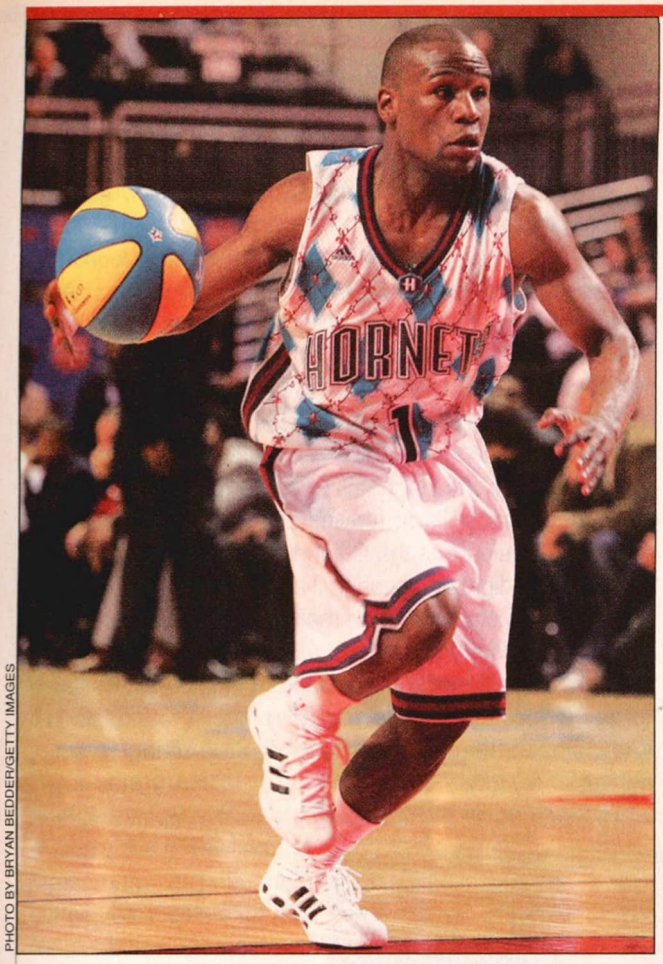


PHOTO BY BRYAN BEDDER/GETTY IMAGES

Hey, Floyd, forget basketball and give competitive eating a shot

Mayweather" has a certain ring to it. Just keep away from those Washington, D.C., call girls, and you'll do fine as a public official.

Play another sport: We all know the mixed martial arts thing was just a tease, an April Fool's Day joke pulled about three months too early. But crossing over to a second sport is a great way to get attention, and it can help with endorsement deals. Who wouldn't love to see a series of commercials where we're told, "Floyd knows boxing. Floyd knows synchronized swimming. Floyd knows equestrian. Floyd knows badminton. Floyd knows hot-dog eating." Forget Roy Jones playing basketball and defending his boxing title on the same day. For a real athletic challenge, how can you top going weiner-for-weiner (minds out of the gutter, people) with Kobayashi and trying to make weight for a fight an hour later?

Try another reality show: Let's see, you've already done *Dancing With The Stars*. Have you considered *Survivor*? A world-class athlete like you ought to dominate the physical challenges. Unfortunately, there's a social element to that game requiring that you get people to like you, so maybe that's not the right show for you. Perhaps *Supernanny*? It would be interesting to see if that disciplinarian could get you to stop acting like an attention-seeking three-year-old. But that might not be the best light to shine on yourself. How about *The Bachelor*? You have the looks, you have the cash. Add it up, and you're quite a catch. Hey, if the third-string quarterback for the New York Giants could do it, certainly the best boxer in the world could.

Release a sex tape: Nothing guarantees buzz in today's world like releasing a video of yourself in the act. Just promise, Floyd, that this will be the one thing you do where Leonard Ellerbe isn't by your side.

Go out nightclubbing with no underwear on: Hey, it helped Britney get some press. Too bad her legs didn't cross over as well as her fame has.

Start a record label: Oh, wait, you already did that. Maybe the next step is to sign an act that actually releases an album.

Marry a starlet: So-called "power couples" are all the rage these days—you get a famous guy hitching his wagon to a famous gal, and suddenly their fame hasn't just doubled, it's quadrupled. Brangelina. Bennifer. TomKat. Demishton. (The Baggoblaster just thought of that last one himself, and yes, he realizes it sounds like crap and that's probably why Ashton and Demi remain "Ashton and

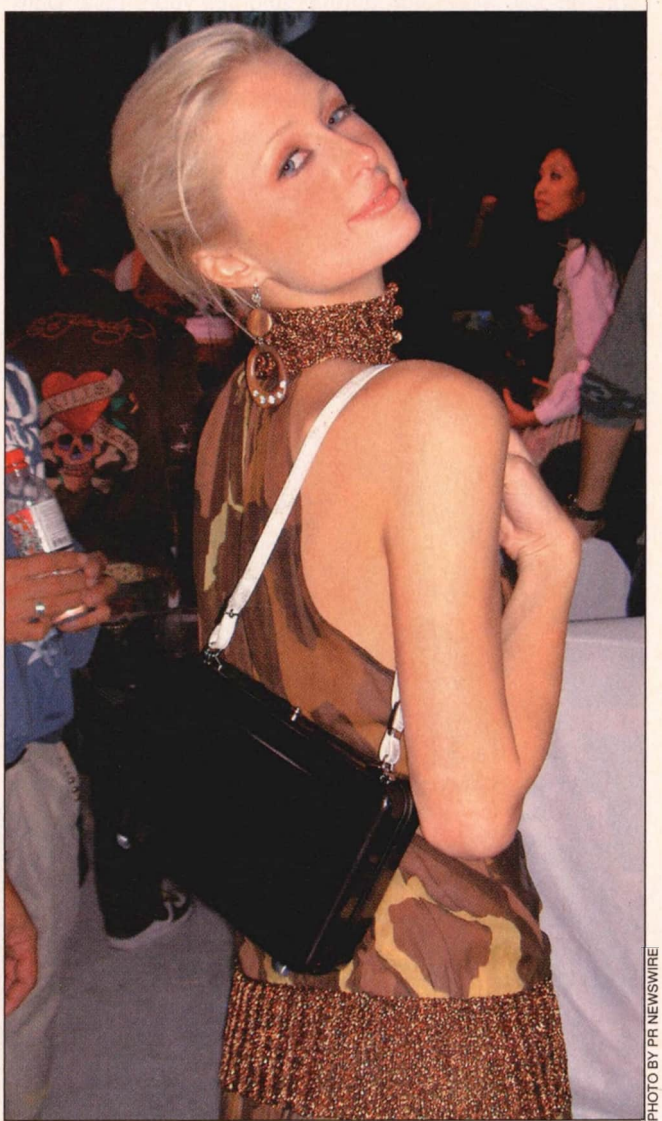


PHOTO BY PR NEWSWIRE

Hooking up with Hilton would be a smooth move

Demi.") Anyway, Floyd, this is definitely the surest way of all to go mainstream. So who's out there for you? How about Lindsay Lohan? They'll call you "Floydsay" or "May-Lo." Perhaps Beyonce will become available, and you can be "Mayonce." Money May and Paris Hilton? You could get the attention of boxing fans, heiress fans, and baseball fans by calling yourselves "Maris."

But the best of all, in terms of starting a buzz, would be you and Robin Givens. No, there isn't a clever one-word name that works. But if you hooked up with the former Mrs. Tyson, something tells the Baggapotomus the tabloids would take interest anyway.

You Mess With The Bagg, You Get The Horns

Apparently, Ivan Goldman doesn't know who he's messing with. Is the Baggareeno supposed to be scared of getting into a war of words with a writer whose idea of an insult is to compare someone to Mr. Magoo? Should the Bagg-o-donuts be nervous that Goldman might dig deeper into his bag of cartoon affronts and call yours truly "Daffy Duck" or "Chief Wigham"?

In the June 2008 issue, Goldman suggested that the world's greatest boxing columnist share his "unhealthy obsessions" with one of his "transvestite bartenders." Well, Ivan, the Baggster took your advice and went down to the neighborhood saloon. But the deep-voiced, hairy-knuckled she-male behind the bar didn't pay much attention to Sir Bagg-a-lot's stories, and frankly, she wasn't any good at mixing drinks either.

In her defense, though, the Baggapple later found out she was distracted because she was struggling to come up with material for this month's "Digging Deep" column.

Cluckin' About The Colonel

The classic cliche about difficulty in multi-tasking involves walking and chewing bubble gum at the same time, and while the Baggatolla has no idea about Colonel Bob Sheridan's skills at moving-and-chewing, he can say without hesitation that the Colonel stinks at providing commentary on a fight and scoring it at the same time.

There's no shame in that, really. Especially when you're a one-man commentary team, as the Colonel often is, and your gums are flapping non-stop from bell to bell, it's tough to pay proper attention to who's winning a round. So you know what Sheridan ought to do? Stop trying to score fights!

His scoring of the Verno Phillips-Cory Spinks fight in March was a disgrace, a distracting misrepresentation for viewers hoping the commentary would explain what they were seeing, rather than contradict it. The Colonel gave Phillips only one round (with one even) in what was actually a flip-a-coin fight. What was it about Spinks' style that looked so good through Blabbermouth Bob's tinted lenses? The pitty-pat punches that Phillips never felt? The constant action-killing movement? Spinks fights are always tough to score, but it was obvious that Phillips was getting *some* work done and winning his share of rounds. The judges saw that, and all of three of them scored the fight close.

The Colonel, on the other hand, was left to stammer afterward about how he must need to go back to school and learn how to score fights all over again.

PHOTO BY DAVID MARTIN-WARR/DKP

What fight was Colonel Bob watching?

The Monthly Mailbagg

By now, you know how it works: You guys send in questions, the Baggbuster responds. It's kind of like those old "To The Max" segments on Friday Night Fights. *Too bad there's a slight gap between the size of Kellerman's paychecks and those earned by his Uncle Baggie.*

Wut up, Baggmeister,

In your opinion, who do you think was a better boxer between Julio Cesar Chavez and Roberto Duran at 135 pounds? Also, who might have won a match between them if they would have ever fought against each other and why?

Lilia Ochoa

Lilia,

Wow, a letter from a lady! The rest of you female admirers out there, don't be shy. Follow Lilia's lead and reach out to the Big Baggoo. Photos are encouraged, though—the Baggtastic needs to be able to weed out the heifers.

Anyway, interesting question about Duran and Chavez, two of the greatest lightweights of all-time, and, just as importantly, two of the most *exciting* among the all-time great lightweights. If you'd asked about Benny Leonard vs. Chavez, or Pernell Whitaker vs. Duran, the Baggnana Split would actually have to think of answers. But when it comes to Chavez vs. Duran, who cares who would have won? All you need to know is it would have been a war for the ages, a battle that would have made Corrales-Castillo look like a slapfest. Unfortunately, their primes didn't overlap and we never got to see it.

Hello, Mr. Bagg,

I sometimes wonder if Evander Holyfield was on steroids the nights of June 19, 1992, and April 19, 1991, when he decisioned Larry Holmes and George Foreman. Did Holyfield alter history? As you know, Holyfield's name was mentioned recently involving a steroids distributor/lab. Remember the lean body Holyfield had during the Olympics? Thanks for your time and keep up the good work.

Jim

Jim,

First off, Holyfield's name was not involved in any recent steroid scandals. You must be thinking of Evan Fields. Totally different guy.

And, second, when the Baggolympic was a young man of 21, he too had a lean body, and it became increasingly less lean as the years went on without any assistance from steroids. Maybe Evander has taken shortcuts, maybe he hasn't; we'll probably never know for sure. Like Mark McGwire, like Barry Bonds, like Roger Clemens, some people will attach an asterisk to everything they've ever done.

The only thing we know for certain: Those flabby bodies on Holmes and Foreman were 100 percent natural. With all that wiggling and jiggling, there's no way anybody slipped any performance enhancers into Big George's cheeseburgers.

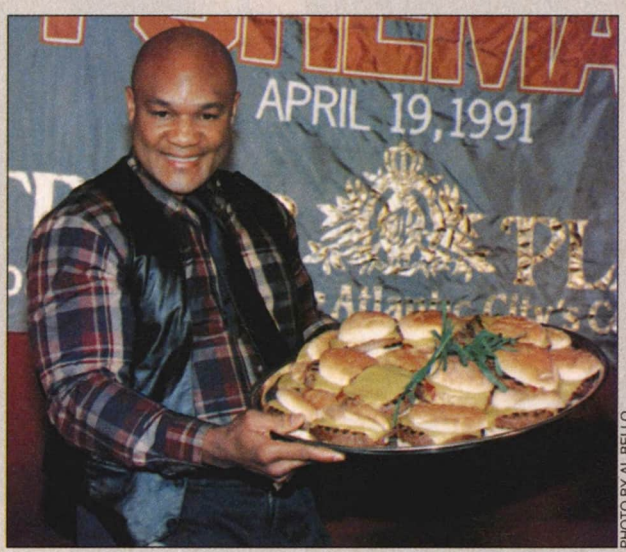


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

George with his favorite performance enhancers

That was the first accurate observation he made all night.

(By the way, congrats on the big win, Verno. You're the kind of hard-nosed fighter the Bagginator loves. And if it turns out you've rid the world of Cory Spinks, you should be viewed as a national hero.)

And The Stingray Goes To ...

Mauro Lucero, who you may remember as the stiff who lost to Joel Julio in one round ... and lost to Panchito Bojado in one round ... and lost to Kelson Pinto in one round ... and lost to Antonio Diaz in two rounds ... and lost to a 41-year-old Vince Phillips in two rounds. Though a decent fighter in the mid-'90s (he lost a majority decision in a title shot against Cesar Bazan in '98), Lucero's been a hapless pushover for nearly a decade now, and brought a 42-12-1 (28) record into his March fight against Bladimir Hernandez, a 22-year-old with a 13-0 (12) record. Sounds like a formula for a one-round kayo loss, right?

Try a four-round kayo win. Lucero, 35, dropped Bladimir in round one (what is it about the fragility of guys whose names end in "ladimir"?) and finished him three rounds later, proving that sometimes a stiff can present a stiffer challenge than he's supposed to. Congrats on the Stingray, Mauro. Even if you lose every fight the rest of your career inside one round—a distinct possibility—nobody can take away from you what you did against young Hernandez. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com

Come Out Writing

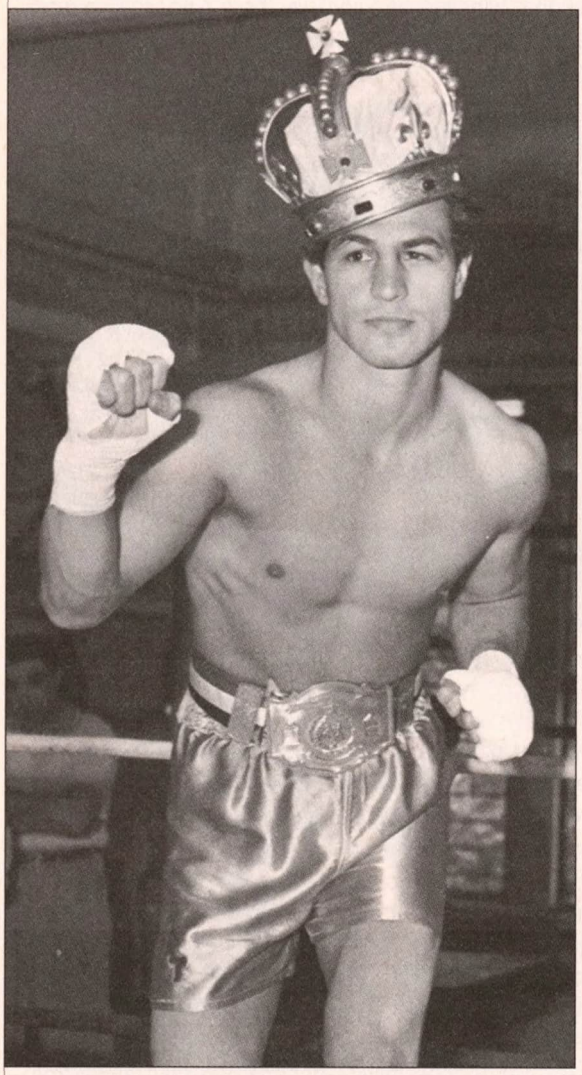
Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Setting The Record Straight

"Nonpareil" Jack Dempsey, featured in the June 2008 issue of THE RING, was an outstanding middleweight champion who was unlucky to encounter Bob Fitzsimmons when he was already beginning to suffer from the ill health that would kill him at 34. Writer Don Stradley is wrong, however, in naming "Curran, Ireland" as his birthplace. There is no such place as Curran, which appears to be a misspelling of The Curragh, in County Kildare, close to where he was born. I have seen it wrongly published elsewhere as "Currans." Dempsey was born John Kelly in Athgarvan, Newbridge, County Kildare, in November 1861 (exact date unknown).

PATRICK MYLER
Dublin, Ireland



Art Aragon is recalled by reader Kenneth L. Zimmerman as one of boxing's earliest showbiz fighters. Aragon, who died on March 25, 2008, never won a world title, but he holds the distinction of being the original "Golden Boy."

Remembering The Original "Golden Boy"

Boxer Art Aragon, who recently passed away, was the Bo Belinsky and Joe Namath of his day—bold, flashy, sexy, exciting, unpredictable, and controversial. He was the first of the "showbiz athletes," with Marilyn Monroe and William Holden as his friends, and had a high-profile romance with glamorous actress Mamie Van Doren. In fact, his image was almost as noticeable as his athletic achievements.

Unfortunately for the "Golden Boy," named for the gold robe and trunks he wore as well as for his flamboyant lifestyle and stunning good looks, his notoriety outside the boxing ring exceeded his skills within it. Though blessed with loads of athletic talent, Aragon was never able to capture a boxing title.

KENNETH L. ZIMMERMAN
Huntington Beach, CA

Road Read

I have just finished reading "Diary Of A Road Warrior" in the June 2006 issue. I have been reading THE RING for about 20 years, and this is one of the best pieces I have read. It is very rare to find such honesty as I read from Steve Cunningham. Despite the limited press Mr. Cunningham has received, I have always been impressed with what others have written about him. But with his own words he has taken me from being a casual fan of his to someone who has a vested interest in him and his career. When he comes back to the U.S. to fight (hopefully, on the West Coast), I will be there in person to support him.

JEREMY TARDIFF
Newport Beach, CA

Poetic Justice

I always had the suspicion that Juan Diaz was much like Mike Tyson, but without a big punch. That is to say, that when a good fighter stood up to him and did not wilt, Diaz would do the wilting.

It seemed like whenever a Mexican fighter got beat, Diaz would mouth off, saying, "Wait until he fights a young Mexican," meaning himself. Well, Nate Campbell was an old fighter and he weathered the early rounds, and then put a first-class butt-whipping on Diaz. In fact, the last several rounds, Diaz was running, hanging on, and just trying to last.

LOU L. EAGLER
Riverside, CA

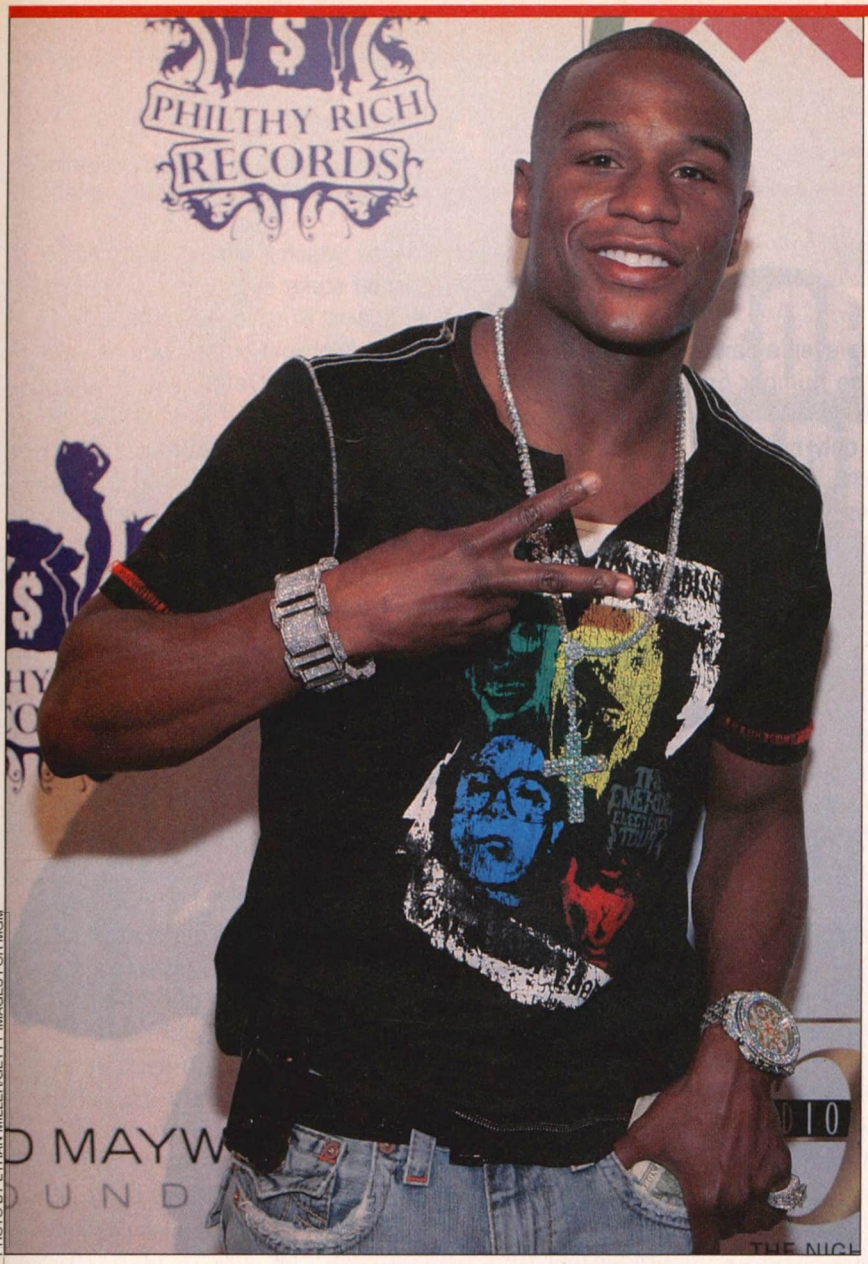


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES FOR MGM

A lot of fans have accused welterweight champion Floyd Mayweather of ducking Miguel Cotto, but reader Gary Burton isn't one of them. Burton thinks "Pretty Boy" is doing the smart thing by waiting until Cotto means more at the box office.

Still Wondering

I loved the stories from Eric Raskin's "What If" section in the June 2008 issue of THE RING. The segment that caught my attention the most was "What If Felix Sturm Got The Decision Over Oscar De La Hoya?" I thought Sturm won the fight, and ever since I've been wondering why this guy isn't fighting anybody. Since the De La Hoya fight in 2004, Sturm has fought 11 times, and the only opponent I've heard of was a washed-up Javier Castillejo—and Sturm lost the first time they fought.

I know Sturm has won an alphabet title twice since the De La Hoya fight, but is he ever going to step up and face someone outside of Europe? Was he just a one-night wonder the evening he faced De La Hoya? Was De La Hoya really *that* out of shape? Unless Sturm finally steps up, I guess we'll never know.

MATT RICHARDSON
ladwood@yahoo.com

Dollars & Sense

Floyd Mayweather is being unfairly criticized for supposedly ducking Miguel Cotto. The huge numbers generated by the Mayweather-Oscar De La Hoya fight have permanently changed the dynamics of the sport. I don't believe Floyd is ducking anyone, and he makes perfect sense when he says that in order for Cotto to share the ring with him, Cotto needs to elevate himself to the same superstar status that Mayweather holds. If not, Mayweather brings everything to the fight and Cotto brings nothing, yet Cotto benefits. Where's the financial sense for Mayweather in that?

This might go against the grain of every boxing purist on Earth, but as well as being participants in the physical savagery of the sport, fighters are also businessmen taking home a paycheck. After years of boxers being exploited, I have no problem with guys like Mayweather making huge financial demands to step into the ring. What would you do?

BRAD MORRIS
Astoria, NY

Proud Of B-Hop

Let me start off by saying I thought Joe Calzaghe outworked and outhustled Bernard Hopkins. However, the 43-year-old B-Hop proved why he is not only a throwback legend, but also one of the craftiest counterpunchers the Sweet Science has ever seen. "The Executioner" has nothing to be ashamed of.

STEPHEN DONATELLI
Pittsburgh, PA

Double Champ

Since Joe Calzaghe recently captured THE RING light heavyweight title belt and also holds THE RING super middleweight title belt, is he the first fighter to hold two or more RING belts concurrently, or has this feat been accomplished before?

GARY BURTON
Beaverton, OR

Editor's Note: Calzaghe is the first since THE RING launched its new Championship Policy in 2002. See "Ringside" editorial (page 3) for more details about Calzaghe's unique situation. ■

By Eric Raskin

The Eye Of "The Tiger" Is On Klitschko

Mismatches are a part of boxing. They're even a part of championship-level boxing. And when the number-one heavyweight in the world takes on a challenger with whom most fans have little-to-no familiarity, it's only natural for people to assume they're getting a mismatch.

Tony Thompson, however, certainly doesn't see his July 12 fight with **Wladimir Klitschko** that way. And the D.C.-area contender uses the perception that he might be just another **Ray Austin** as extra motivation heading into the biggest fight of his life.

"People have tried to write me off my whole career, and look where it's got me," Thompson said in April during the early stages of training for his title shot. "Any athlete that's worth anything, they want to prove the doubters wrong and they want to be the best, and those are my goals."

Thompson has already proven quite a few of the doubters wrong, winning his last 27 fights over the course of an eight-year unbeaten streak. His only pro loss came in his fifth fight, a four-round decision, and since then he's beaten his share of solid heavyweights, including **Yanqui Diaz**, **Vaughn Bean**, **Dominick Guinn**, **Timor Ibragimov**, and **Luan Krasniqi**. Is that enough to make him deserving of an alphabet-mandated title shot? Opinions vary on that one.

But is he more dangerous to Klitschko than a lot of people think? Consider: Thompson is a 6'5" southpaw with a longer reach than the Ukrainian's, he has an awkward, frustrating style and good defense, and, with 19 knockouts on his 31-1 record, he has just enough power that his potential to hurt Klitschko can't be dismissed.

"I've got the style to give anybody problems," Thompson asserted. "But I won't underestimate Klitschko; he's pretty smart in the ring, and the guy has incredible power. One punch, he can pretty much decapitate you. And his chin isn't the weakness a lot of people say it is. In heavyweight fights, I don't care who it is, if a 250-pound guy hits you on the chin, you will go. If you look at the guys who stopped him, they're definitely guys that can punch through a brick house, so I'm not going into it thinking that I can hit this guy with one shot and knock him out. I'll have to put together a series of punches, which is what I usually do."

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Thompson tests Klitschko's chin at Hamburg press conference

"Tony The Tiger" opened some eyes with the series of punches he put together against Krasniqi, when he scored a surprisingly easy fifth-round knockout of the German veteran. That fight took place at the Color Line Arena in Hamburg, the same venue that will host Klitschko-Thompson. So, to an extent, the 36-year-old challenger has "been there, done that," even if the "that" standing in front of him is very different from the "that" he's already handled.

"I can't be thinking about the Krasniqi fight, he's a totally different fighter from Klitschko," Thompson acknowledged.

And fans shouldn't be thinking about Klitschko's second-round annihilation of alphabet mandatory Austin in March '07, because Thompson is a totally different fighter from Austin. On July 12 on HBO, he'll get his chance to prove this is no mismatch. And maybe he'll get his chance to prove much more than that.

Listen Up

On the topic of alphabet-mandated fights that may or may not be mismatches, world middleweight champ **Kelly Pavlik** takes on Welshman **Gary Lockett** in Atlantic City on June 7. The intriguing HBO co-feature pits 122-pound puncher **Daniel Ponce De Leon** against unbeaten **Juan Manuel Lopez** ... Showtime goes head-to-head against HBO on June 7 with a solid show featuring **Carlos Quintana-Paul Williams** II and **Vernon Forrest-Sergio Mora** ... Showtime is the home of the rematch in the months ahead. In addition to Quintana-Williams II, it's looking like **Arthur Abraham-Edison Miranda** II on June 21 and **Ricardo Torres-Kendall Holt** II on July 5 ... For fans of women's boxing (assuming there still are some), the best fight that can be made now that it's clear **Laila Ali** vs. **Ann Wolfe** is never happening is **Holly Holm**, 21-1-2 (6) vs. **Mary Jo Sanders**, 25-0 (8). That fight has been signed for June 13 and will be available on pay-per-view ... Apparently, confidence is high that **Manny Pacquiao** can sell his June 28 PPV bout against **David Diaz** all by himself. The co-feature gives us clumsy behemoth **Tye Fields** vs. fading former contender **Monte Barrett**, with '04 Olympian **Vanes Martirosyan** filling another TV slot. ■

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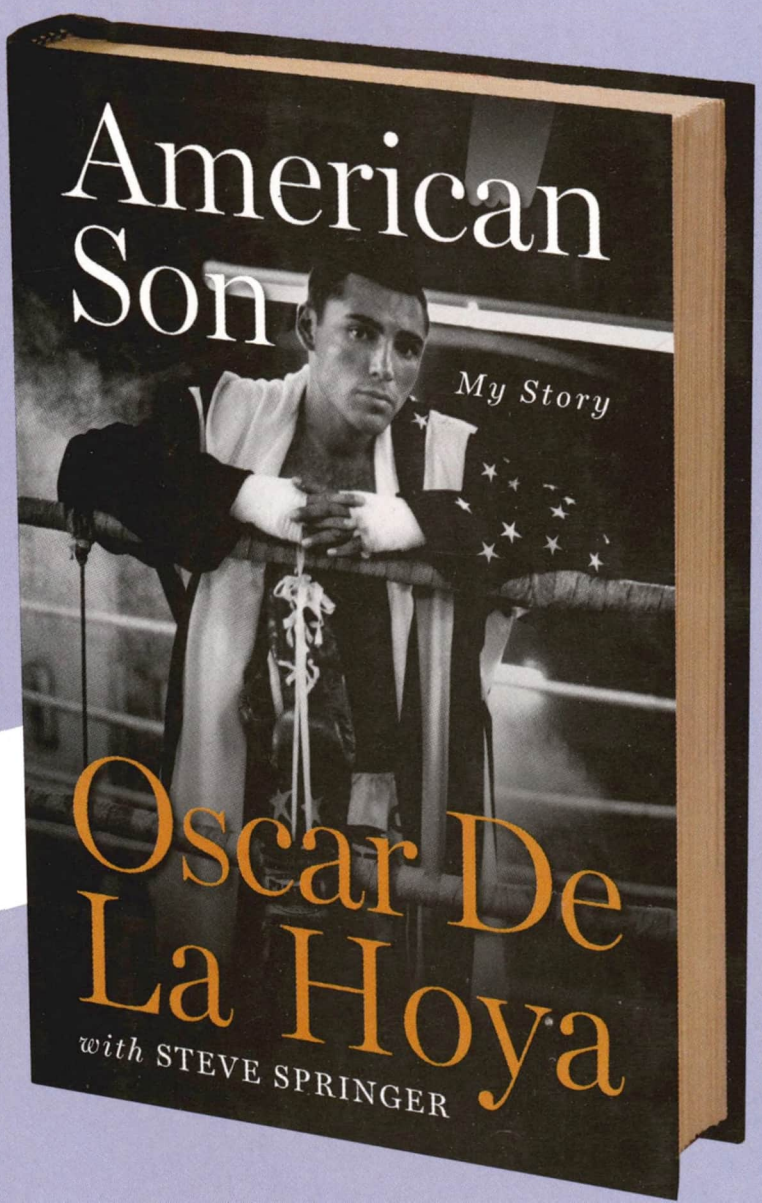
FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, OSCAR DE LA HOYA TELLS HIS STORY

From one of the most talked-about fighters in the history of boxing comes a frank and touching memoir. Oscar De La Hoya writes about his rise to the top of the boxing world, the strength of a solid work-ethic, the pitfalls of stardom, and his own Hispanic-American identity.



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